

ANIMATION

WORLD

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MAGAZINE

March 1998

PRE-PRODUCTION

WILD BRAIN ON
FERNGULLY 2

INTERVIEW WITH
MAURICE NOBLE

REALFLASH
DEMYSTIFIED

GAMING
LUCASARTS STYLE

PLUS: OSCAR REPORT

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Cover: *FernGully 2: The Magical Rescue*, produced by Wild Brain, will be released as a direct-to-video title on March 17, 1998. © 1997 Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, The CBS/Fox Company. All Rights Reserved.



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

by Heather Kenyon

Remembering and depicting the past...

Historians naturally have a difficult time discovering the past for several reasons. Human nature, politics and, of course, the all-mighty dollar play a role. Finding animation's history might even be a little more difficult because opposed to an event that many people witnessed or were involved in, the early years of animation came and went with little documentation.

It is human nature to want to say positive things about people we admire. However, we run into trouble when the people documenting history only record what their subjects want to have remembered and not what is the truth. People writing books and articles really have to do their research in order to guarantee delivery of the full story. Another facet of human nature, is, as Andrew Lederer points out in "Mae Questel: A Reminiscence, History and Perspective," sometimes when folks age, so too do their memories. One can misleadingly think they are getting information from 'the source' in personal interviews.

The two other elements that lead to historical twisting are politics and money. Often the truth cannot come out because a person, with no malicious intent, does not want to go on record with their statements, their true feelings. On a much larger scale, in today's world of super-huge corporate news, headlines tend to get pre-fabricated and he who yells the loudest, wins. While fluff is hyped, the real stories can go unnoticed. There is

another trend that is occurring in print publications as well that is disturbing. Magazines are going to great lengths in order to secure certain stars or properties for their covers. For instance, in an attempt to get a mega-star on the cover, a magazine

will let the star pick their interviewer, the subject matter to be discussed, etc. While this is so far only happening in the more fluffy entertainment magazines and on the magazine type news shows, it is a trend to watch as the line between reporting and entertainment blurs.

This leads us to the thing that has been called the root of all evil, money. Sure magazines with a catchy cover sell. No one can blame the publisher. If a publisher wants, for example, a coffee table book of art work by a certain studio, but not a detailed text of the production, fine. It is his dime and the writer will adhere.

Again, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage people with stories to document them. We are also interested in hearing stories from the past and would like to encourage people to contact us if they would like to have their memoirs published in the form of an article. The work of many museums, archives, ASIFA chapters and organizations like Women In Animation are helping with this drive to preserve history and deserve our support. If we do not take the time now



to document bravely the truth, then we will have a more difficult time remembering and piecing together our animation heritage tomorrow.

On a completely different note, I hope you enjoy this March issue of *Animation World Magazine* with its spotlight on the art of pre-production. A solid pre-

production process is growing more important as production work on a single show is being completed more and more frequently by a collection of studios. Having a solid foundation certainly helps a project make it through cultural boundaries, communication difficulties caused by distance (is a fax really as good as a one-on-one meeting?), and a large number of international cooks without it losing its flavor and strength. Television has long been shipped overseas in the United States and Europe. Plus, now with the help of CARTOON, projects are being shipped in-between a number of European studios. Even on the feature front, *The Lion King*, for example, was animated in both the Florida and California studios. The importance of pre-production is paramount when it comes to leading a solid, on time, on-budget show. All our experts agree, a little more time up front can save a lot of grief in the end.

Until next time...
Heather

Praise for the February Issue

Thanks for the great February issue (2.11). I completely enjoyed every article and hope as a new hobbyist of stop-motion animation you continue with more articles like "At Last, Foam Puppet Fabrication Explained!" and "How'd They Do That?: Stop-Motion Secrets Revealed." I also hope you provide more information on low cost film/video systems and how to use them for amateurs like myself. It's hard to find really timely information on systems other than RealFlash.

Thanks again,
Kevin Stout
Marysville, WA

Dear Kevin:

If you would like to know more about the stop-motion animation process from a technical point-of-view, read "Our Animation Process" by Mike Dietz of The Neverhood which was featured in our December, 1997 Gaming issue (2.9). While we are focusing on RealFlash in this issue we will try to review the latest new technologies to keep you abreast of the situation.

Sincerely,
The Editors

More Praise for Tom

I thought the article, "At Last, Foam Puppet Fabrication Explained!" (Brierton 2.11), was great. However is it possible to get diagrams on each of the armature joints described? This sort of information is very difficult to get. Also some parts of the article were unclear, especially where Tom was explaining attaching the ball bearing to a rod. I believe Tom drilled the ball bearing? Can he advise the best way to do this?

I run a small animation business. I do some basic armature construction but would like to construct more accurate models. Being a self-

taught, stop-motion animator here in Australia, I find it very difficult to find good information and advice. *Animation World Magazine* is 'the best' resource I have found yet in my business.

Sincerely,
Antony Bunyan

Tom Brierton replies:

I drill my bearings out on a lathe, using conventional jobber drill bits. This is about the only practical way to drill the bearings, because the hole needs to be dead center on the ball.

As far as obtaining detailed drawings of armature parts, I provide a service of supplying either mechanical drawings of armature parts, or, I can either machine an entire armature for a client, or individual parts. Clients tend to opt for individual parts, as it's less expensive. Then, they can see what a professional armature part looks like, and then mass-produce them themselves, provided of course, that they have access to a lathe and mill.

Hope this helps. Feel free to write back if you have further questions.

More Info Needed Ms. Thompson!

Your article in *Animation World Magazine* (Issue 2.9, December 1997) "How to Find a Job in Multimedia" by Pamela Kleibrink Thompson was excellent!

I am a high school senior who plans to enter the WVU Graphic Design program in the fall of 1998 and I have a few more questions for Ms. Thompson. My main interest is in multimedia, electronic art and specifically computer animation.

- WVU does not offer a specific animation program. Can you offer me any advice on how to tailor a graphics arts degree towards computer animation?

- When will your book *The Animation Job Hunter's Guide* be available? Can you provide ordering information?

- Where can I find copies of other articles you have written on this subject?

Thank you for your insight!
AJ Blosser

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson replies:

*When you mention that you are interested in computer animation, I will go with the assumption that you are interested in 3-D character animation. If this is the case, it is important that you design a course of study that includes learning the fundamentals of traditional animation (squash and stretch, how to time a gag, overlapping action, etc.). You should also learn about filmmaking (understand lighting, cinematography, etc), and especially storyboarding. It is also recommended that you learn some graphics programming and UNIX. An excellent text on animation is *The Illusion of Life* by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston.*

*My book, *The Animation Job Hunter's Guide*, will be available by early December. I hope to finish it sooner. (Editor's note: *Animation World Magazine* will announce the publication of the book in the *Animation Flash* newsletter.)*

*I have written on animation for many publications including: *Career and Colleges*, October 1991, *September/October 1992*, *Equal Opportunity*, Winter 1992, *Hispanic*, March 1992, *Apple Directions*, July 1995, *Women in Animation Work* in *Progress*, January 1996, *Circle K*, March 1996, *Animation World Magazine*, June 1997 (2.3) and, of course, the December 1997 issue too.*

I'm glad you liked the article and hope you find it useful.

FernGully 2: The Magical Rescue Getting the Money on the Screen

by Dave Marshall and Phil Robinson.

Editor's note: In 1990, Bill and Sue Kroyer directed an animated feature called FernGully: The Last Rainforest for Twentieth Century Fox and Interscope Communications. This month, Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment will release FernGully 2: The Magical Rescue, a direct-to-video sequel produced by San Francisco-based studio, Wild Brain. With the current growth in the direct-to-video animation market, we decided to take a closer look at the production process. Exclusively for Animation World Magazine, FernGully 2 co-directors Dave Marshall and Phil Robinson generously share their experience overseeing pre-production for the film.

We recently produced our first direct-to-video feature, *FernGully 2: The Magical Rescue* for Twentieth Century Fox. All pre-production work including character design, layout, storyboard, timing, background and color key was completed in our San Francisco facility, while animation production took place at Wang Film Productions in Taipei, Taiwan. Wild Brain directed all other aspects of pre- and post-production in both San Francisco and Los Angeles including editing, music composition, voice talent casting and all sound recording and mixing.

Getting Started

We knew from experience that the only sure way to hit our budget and meet the schedule would be to solve all unanswered

questions in pre-production. There are several key factors that are essential to the pre-production process that we established as priorities including: good communication with the production facility, a strong script and a great storyboard.

Of course, our very first priority was creating a realistic budget for the job and then designing for that budget! (For instance, if one has a low budget, simplify the writing and design, and limit the color palette, but, in our opinion, do not skimp on the storyboard!) This went hand-in-hand with having a thorough understanding of our production facility's needs, strengths and weaknesses. Our expectations had to be reasonable.

Here are some suggestions we can make to help you produce the best possible final product based on 17 months of that good ol' tried and true combination of blood, sweat and tears:

The only sure way to hit our budget and meet the schedule would be to solve all unanswered questions in pre-production.

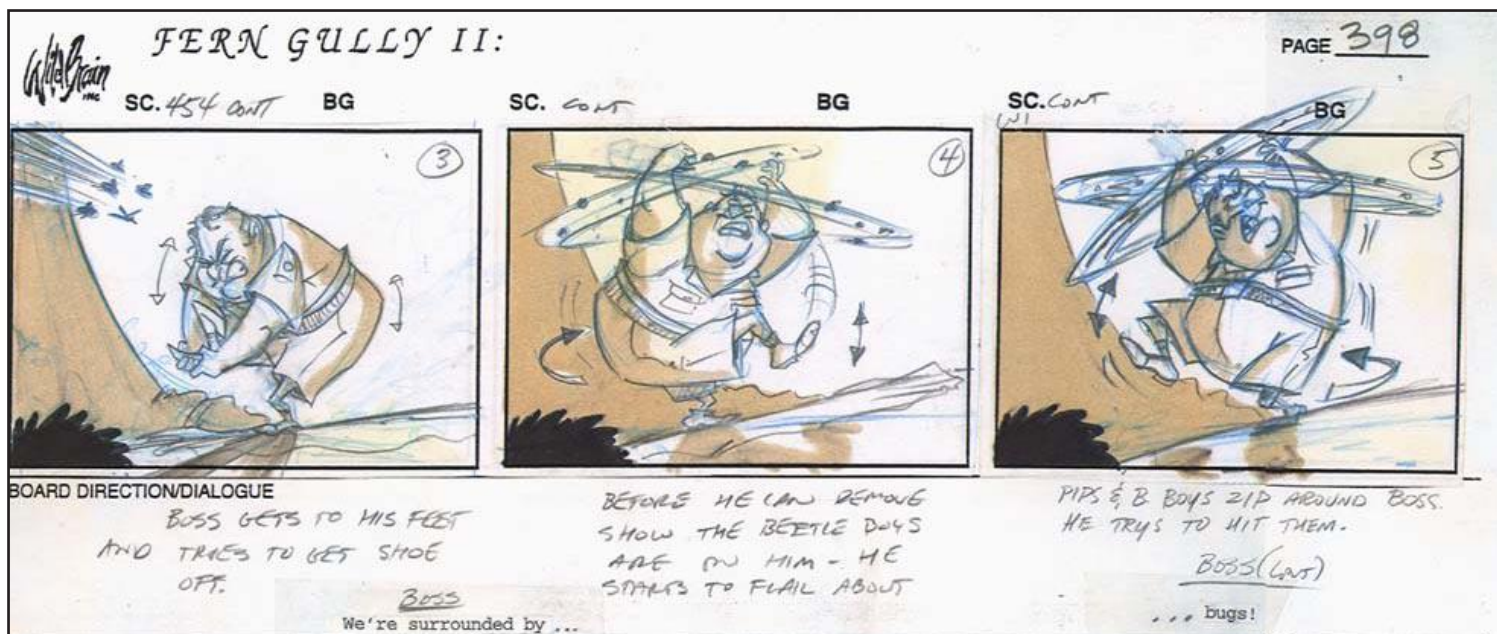
Communicate with the Production Facility

Allow your facility to become a part of the process as early as pos-



© Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1997
The CBS/Fox Company, courtesy of Wild Brain.

sible. Encourage them to be honest with you about what they can do for the budget, within the schedule. Be clear about the production standard you need to meet, and talk openly about your mutual goals. What are their concerns? Find out. Production facilities usually have more actual production experience than the pre-production crews. They can help spot potential production hazards ahead of time. Do not, however, expect them to take the leap into creative decision-making. This is an area that often leads to disappointment. It's up to you to communicate exactly how something should look. Production facil-



A storyboard panel from *FernGully2*. Also included with the on-line version of article is a supplement of several more storyboard panels. © 1997 Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, The CBS/Fox Company, courtesy of Wild Brain.

ities are good at getting the job done, not designing the job.

Both of us have overseas production experience [Dave spent eight years at Wang as the animation supervisor; Phil has experience in Korea, Taiwan and three years in the Philippines], so we are familiar with the tendency for the American side of production to design things that are difficult for the overseas artists to reproduce. In the case of *FernGully 2*, we were able to design the production to complement Wang's strengths and minimize the weaknesses.

We deliberately designed the film to be fast-paced but eliminated complex sequences, crowd scenes and scenes that would require good acting on the part of the animator. We were pleasantly surprised, however, at how good some of the animators were. Taiwan is familiar enough with American culture to understand the Western mannerisms of the characters. We tried not to add too many locations and we limited the amount of lighting changes which saved additional design time as well. We also avoided costly effects scenes and complicated camera moves that

would snarl production once it got to the camera department.

We had two animation supervisors and one background supervisor in Taiwan for the duration of the production. They worked very closely with the Taiwanese directors in a collaborative way, not as bosses but as co-workers. There was a conscious effort on the part of both Wild Brain and Wang to create a joint effort. We believe that our combined efforts, careful planning and close working relationship were responsible for getting a great looking film for the time and budget. We were a team.

Of course, our very first priority was creating a realistic budget for the job and then designing for that budget!

Scripting

If the script is weak then even the best animation can't engage the audience, so we decided to play on our strength as storytellers in the scripting process rather than rely on expensive production techniques down the road.

A good script must read

well. The story arc must have its high points and low points building up to a finale where the viewer is truly interested in what will happen to the central characters. An erroneous assumption is that animation will make the characters more likable and believable; that when the characters are in motion, the clichés of the dialogue and plot will disappear. This is wrong!

We capitalized on our studios collaborative approach to production while simplifying the original script in ways that would best benefit the animating teams, design teams, and color designer. We opened our twice-weekly story meetings to all studio personnel: directors, animators and designers. During six weeks of "open door" brainstorming sessions, we made the story objectives clear: straightforward, action-driven sequences and sympathetic characters with depth. We also aimed to establish character development through visual means and not rely solely on dialogue.

We eliminated sequences too complicated to be animated on our schedule. If there were action sequences, we prioritized our loca-



© 1997 Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, The CBS/Fox Company, courtesy of Wild Brain.

tion designers to start on these areas first. These were our first storyboards. The diverse story team also kept us from falling into stereotypical "cute" solutions. As soon as we nailed a sequence, we put it into storyboard.

We could not afford to wait until we had a complete script, so we had to start storyboarding right away. We knew that storyboarding before the script was complete would result in some re-do, but we had no choice. We were racing against the clock. In the end, we were pleased with our risk-taking and we did not have too much reboarding to do.

Storyboard

The storyboard is the visual blueprint of the film. Whatever strengths or weakness appear in the storyboard will almost certainly show up in the finished film. If you want to see it in the film, it must be in the boards, every pose, every expression, everything.

We were careful to cast the board artists to compliment their individual strengths. We gave the preliminary script to all of our board artists as early as possible. They got to spend this additional time familiarizing themselves with the whole

story. Whenever possible, the artists made requests for sequences they were most interested in working on. This was helpful in the long run because they usually got the sections that they felt most comfortable with and the end result was great. When an artist is happy and feels that their contribution is making the picture better, they're willing to go the extra distance when you really need them to.

We concentrated on strong character expressions that told the story in an uncomplicated way. Rarely does a bad storyboard expression, weak pose or off-model character end up looking better after it is animated. It is most important to keep your characters in the storyboard on model and the expressions correct.

Background Color

Background artwork contributes greatly to the overall warmth and emotions of a film, as well as adds richness to the final product. Color tends to dominate the frame. All background color has to be determined before the production facility starts painting. We roughly painted the storyboard to give us the general color direction. We solved almost all of our location

color styling using this method. Working directly on the storyboards allowed us to experiment with different color schemes before hiring top background painters. Once we were set on the colors, we then had background artists paint small, highly rendered location backgrounds which were then shipped to Wang to be used as guides in the actual production. This was done for every location, day and night, that would appear in the film.

Character Design

The coolest looking characters are only cool if the animators can animate them. The first film had a set look that we had to follow, but we still had a bunch of new characters to design. We tried to make these new designs simple with a definite style. We wanted to add a fresh dynamic look that would blend nicely with what had been done before, as well as inspire the animators. All animators seem to love meaty, fun characters to animate.

We never shipped until the work was completed to satisfaction. That was our golden rule.

Color Design

Try to limit the number of colors in your palette. We worked from Wang's color palette to avoid having them mix special colors for our film.

Character and Model Design Pack

Basically every character, every object, everything that moves needs to be designed and drawn from all angles. The animators need to know exactly what characters and objects look like in order to animate confidently. There is tremen-

dous pressure put on the animators. Not only are they expected to animate in the neighborhood of 50 feet per week, they only get paid per foot of finished animation and not having enough information can really slow them down. We supplied every expression, every mouth position used for every character in the film. This was to keep the animators from inventing their own interpretations. We supplied completely detailed x-sheets (exposure sheets) with all timing, lip sync, behavior and actions clearly marked.

We also built our main characters and vehicles with CG. We animated 200 scenes of the characters flying and vehicles moving in order to help lighten Wang's burden. We believed that by solving the flying mechanics and vehicular movement for them, it would give them more time to concentrate on the acting scenes. The scenes animated in CG were then printed out on registered animation paper and shipped to Wang for clean-up and detailing. The CG animation still needed facial features, hair and clothes added. They were then inked and painted, the same as the rest of the scenes.

Other Elements

There are numerous other elements to a solid pre-production process, not the least of which are backgrounds, layouts and exposure sheets. Without going into each one of them, we can say this: our crew worked hard and had to jump around a lot to cover all the bases. We had a small team and very few department managers.

As directors, we covered a lot of territory, more than for a nor-

mal production. We were the quality control. We tweaked storyboards and corrected poor layouts. We were involved in CG reference, location design, color design, x-sheet and (exposure sheet) timing. Phil spent three months in Taiwan approving pencil tests, reviewing layouts and checking color, and he even did one of the voices. We worked closely with the songwriters, musicians, actors, composers and sound designers as well.

The production managers stayed late many nights to ensure that shipments overseas were made on time. However, we never shipped until the work was completed to satisfaction. That was our golden rule.

Ultimately, we worked bloody hard and that's the most important step.

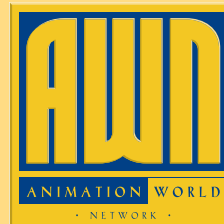


Dave Marshall & Phil Robinson.

Note: Also included in the on-line version of this article is a visual supplement with several storyboard panels from the film, at <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.12/2.12pages/2.12marshallfern-gully>.

Dave Marshall and Phil Robinson co-directed FernGully 2: The Magical Rescue for Fox at Wild Brain in San Francisco.

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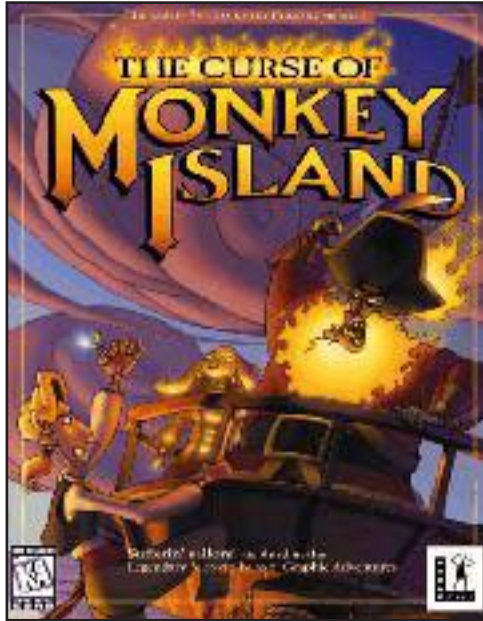
Pre-Production on The Curse of Monkey Island at LucasArts

by Russell Bekins

In the world of interactive game makers, where companies disappear and reorganize with the speed of particles in a linear accelerator, LucasArts Entertainment stands out as a model of stability and productivity. Though the gaming world admires their *StarWars*-inspired action games, I have long admired their pioneering cartoon work in adventure-animation games.

With *Maniac Mansion* in the 1980s, LucasArts established a new form of the cartoon interactive game. Followed by the acclaimed *Day Of The Tentacle*, the hilarious *Sam And Max Hit The Road*, and the dark humor-tinged *Full Throttle*, this company has been raising the standards in this art form for years. They have successfully made the transition in technology from the very limited possibilities of early adventure gaming platforms to something that looks very much like feature, or at least television, animation. Their products are known for their sharp-edged wit, funny visual gags and cool artistic style.

Such unfettered creativity in a collective art form is mighty sus-



© LucasArts.

Silicon Graphics workstations somewhere deep in a basement? Determined to get to the bottom of the matter, I set out to investigate.

Such unfettered creativity in a collective art form is mighty suspicious.

The Dominion of The Hyphenates

Actually, I was disappointed on both accounts. What I encountered was a company where creativity is fostered within a surprisingly conventional structure. The strength of the organization rests instead with a rigorous peer review system, a culture of mentoring that gives credit where it is due, a stable senior staff, a roaring production department, and a commitment not

picious. Are the rumors true of roller-skating wonderkids with their genius spilling onto the pavement outside their San Rafael headquarters? Or are darker forces at work, such as a team of Malaysian programmers chained to

to release a product before the artists involved are satisfied.

Most of all, LucasArts differs in the way they select and treat their senior team leaders. The senior team leaders are the artistic core of the project and are treated as such. While most start as programmers, they soon become hyphenates: programmer-writers, writer-animators and so on. The cultivation of these hybrids makes it possible to move ahead with projects with only a slender production book to guide them. The actual writing of dialogue occurs on the fly as programming, artwork and animation move ahead in tandem. This method may sound like heresy in the feature animation world, but this company somehow gets it right.

Writer-animators Larry Ahern and programmer-writer Jonathan Ackley are exemplary hyphenates. They were the co-team leaders for the recent pirate-themed satirical release *The Curse Of Monkey Island*. Universally acclaimed by reviewers and game players alike, this sequel to two earlier LucasArts games, again stretches the bounds of artistry in the genre of interactive animation games. A little over two years ago, Ahern and Ackley took the idea of this project to management.

The Wrong Credentials

Though their office is crammed with toys (including a borrowed Rock 'em Sock 'em Robot set)

Ahern and Ackley are hardly the image of goofy post-adolescent wunderkinds. They exude professionalism and pride in their product, though the self-effacing wit that suffuses *Monkey Island* slips out at times. As Larry Ahern admits, they 'have all the wrong credentials' to find themselves as senior team leaders, but there they are, ensconced in their own office, separated from the cubicles that predominate LucasArts' production floor.

A fine arts graduate from U.C. Davis, Larry Ahern designed T-shirts and coffee mugs before arriving at the right place at the right time. Interviewed ("the guy just flipped through my design book") and hired, he joined LucasArts during the production of the second *Monkey Island* game. "I got lucky in that the technology curve of games coincided with my learning curve of animation," he admits. The animation was so limited at the time, Larry laughs, that it was possible to

learn the craft on the job. He did animation on *Day Of The Tentacle* and *Sam And Max Hit The Road*, and then graduated to lead ani-

The actual writing of dialogue occurs on the fly as programming, artwork and animation move ahead in tandem.

mator on *Full Throttle*.

U.C. Santa Cruz alum Jonathan Ackley taught himself to program on his Atari, and came to work for the company when his girlfriend's boss became angry that he was calling her all the time at LucasArts educational division. "If he's got nothing better to do," the disgruntled chief reportedly complained, "maybe he can come up here and do clerical work." Moving into programming, Jonathan did lip sync ("a real pain to program" in the days before automated voice synchronization) and programming on *Day Of The Tentacle*, as well as pro-

gramming and the wild sound effects on *Sam And Max*. He also programmed on *Full Throttle* and *The Dig*.

By 1995, both Larry and Jonathan had accrued enough experience to become senior team leaders. They began lunch time brainstorming sessions that summer as Jonathan was finishing up with *The Dig*. Since no one had done a sequel to the *Monkey Island* series for several years, it seemed a natural. Now they had to get the idea accepted.

The Gauntlet

Team leaders at LucasArts are grateful that the management is not burdened with a lot of wanna-be creative executives. "They're excellent businessmen, not closet game designers," says Jonathan Ackley, in the highest praise a creative type can give a manager. Though a proposal for a new product goes first to the director of development, head



Though their office is crammed with toys, LucasArts writer-animator Larry Ahern and programmer-writer Jonathan Ackley are hardly the image of goofy post-adolescent wunderkinds. © LucasArts.

of marketing, and the president of the company, the really scary step is the peer review process.

Senior team leaders of the 20-25 projects in development get together and scrutinize the proposal. "These meetings are usually spirited discussions about what is good and not so good about a proposal," says director of development Steve Dauterman, in what is probably an understatement. With such a heavy development slate, the company is now adding only one or two projects a year.

In Larry and Jonathan's case, management was understandably sanguine about a sequel to one of their franchises. At Christmas, they took three weeks to consolidate their brainstorming sessions and presented a 15-page summary to the team leaders. They were given the go-ahead, with the proviso that they consult with Tim Shaffer, a programmer-writer on the original *Monkey Island* series, for the sake of continuity.

There was only one problem. The original *Monkey Island* games, while clever, funny and imaginative, were designed to play on computers with limited graphics capabilities and looked more like Super Nintendo graphics; they were shrimpy and pixilated. This new addition to the series was to be designed to play on far more advanced machines, capable of delivering far more sophisticated animation. The cover art on the previous games had led fans to expect a handsome Guybrush Threepwood, the pirate wanna-be lead character. The artistic struggle to nail down a new look for the central characters would turn out to be one of the biggest challenges of the production.



Concept drawings and preliminary designs are tacked on the wall during development.
© LucasArts.

The Map

Both Larry and Jonathan are forceful in their assertion that careful pre-production is vital to a successful game production. Working together over the next two months, they laid out a full story outline, a game outline, a prop list (critical to adventure gaming) and a full list of 'rooms' (the environments, whether indoors or outdoors). Out of this slender design document, the entire CD-ROM was to emerge. "We had the entire game on paper before we started," notes Jonathan.

This process is harder than it sounds. Each obstacle in the story is accompanied by a puzzle element that involves the lead character in moving around, talking to the right people, saying the right things, picking up the right stuff and combining props. This makes for a monstrously big story, and it's easy to get lost.

Their method of tracking this was to outline the series of actions required to reach the next level. The particular form of this outline is a LucasArts secret, though the author of this article has glimpsed that carefully guarded format. What is fascinating is that it turns what is considered a non-linear storytelling form into a very linear process. The game outline also details quite a number of the visual and verbal gags in the story.

Note, however, that there was no actual script, nor was the key art for the lead characters approved yet. That was to come.

A Very Large Yellow Legal Pad and Some Cruddy Sketches

Map in hand, Jonathan, along with fellow writer-programmers Chris Purvis and Chuck Jordan, built the basic game using crude programmer art to mark their

places. Using LucasArts' patented SCUMM (Script Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion) game engine, they had the bare bones of the programming together within a month.

Larry meanwhile, was wandering around with a large yellow legal pad, writing up cost estimates for the art involved. He confesses, in retrospect, that not all the figures were right. "This was the first time I had done a production where we did all the animation on paper, scanned it in, and inked and painted digitally," he admits ruefully. A few elements of the original design, including a 'cool alligator game' got nixed from the start due to cost. It was nip and tuck as to whether a shipwreck transition animation would make it in.

It was now time for the team to grow. "Has anyone read the script yet?" Larry recalls someone inquiring.

A Funny Phone Book

Both Larry and Jonathan are quick to praise the imagination of writer-programmers Jordan and Purvis. The fact that the game itself was outlined so early in the process meant that creativity could reign. Within the structure Purvis and Jordan could "experiment and improvise." Meetings expanded to include background artist Bill Tiller and animator Marc Overney. More gags were added as they laid out the story elements with bad sketches on note cards.

"The writing process is a back and forth thing," Larry waxes philosophically after the fact. "A lot of the bad stuff that comes out of animation, the Saturday morning cartoon model, is often: we have a script writer, he writes a script, they

hand it over, and people just try to make the visuals for it. Whereas some of the great old Warner Bros. cartoons were a visual gag-story process that went back and forth."

In practice, the team would use place-holder dialogue as well as art as the product evolved. "We'd get a red pen and write, 'Arrgh, I hate you,' then we'd go back and expand on that to [something like], 'I want you to die a thousand deaths,'" Larry notes. "The scope and the size dictate that it has to be written as it is programmed, so that it is an organic process."

Suggestions for gags and ideas came from literally everyone in the producing team, including the test department. The script, when finally written through this process, grew to a hefty 8,357 lines. "It's like a funny phone book," quips Jonathan. "A single writer makes for an emptier product."

All of this creativity is a wonderful thing, but the acid test comes when production begins.

Both Larry and Jonathan are forceful in their assertion that careful pre-production is vital to a successful game production.

Enter The Bad Cops

At LucasArts, the team leaders normally concentrate on the creative aspects, leaving such drudgery as scheduling and budgeting to the production department. The production manager for *The Curse Of Monkey Island* was Camela Boswell, who works on as many as five productions at a time. "I think it's hard for the team to understand that we're not able to focus on one production," she sighs. "We have to

play the bad cop and that's fine. We know that's our role." Actually, she wasn't concerned that there wasn't a script. "That's not the way we work," she asserts. The dialogue was not locked until over a year into the production process.

Up to the point where the design document was finished, Boswell's task was mainly to provide support and research for Larry and Jonathan. She has high praise for the preparation work that they put in. "They were better organized than almost any project I've ever worked on," Camela reports. "It was one of the smoothest projects as well." The ramp-up to full production began four months into the process. At that point, a core team that eventually grew to 50 people was assembled, a very large project by any measure.

It's not like it was all smooth sailing, however. According to one source within the production, the energetic lead and extensive planning that Larry and Jonathan gave to the project sometimes led to interpersonal conflicts. Unused to having team leaders who were so hands-on, some of the creative types complained that they were not given enough artistic latitude.

In Boswell's view, however, the key obstacle in the production was the debate over the look of Guybrush Threepwood and the other lead characters. "We struggled with designing the characters," Larry acknowledges. Inspired by *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, he eventually drew Guybrush as a pencil-necked beanpole with a flounce of eighteenth-century hair and a nose as vertical as the face of Half Dome. Larry insists that the extra time and deliberation was worth it, even though the anima-

tion staff was chomping at the bit to get started.

There were also technology struggles. Coming up to speed on the ink-and-paint process of the US Animation System created bottlenecks in the production pipeline. "The animators came in for a lot of crunch time at the end," Larry confesses. Going through three different production coordinators didn't help matters either. Vaguely scheduled on the chalkboard to be finished by the summer of '97, *The Curse Of Monkey Island* hit the shelves in the fall of that year instead.

"What a lot of people don't understand is that dates are more nebulous in this medium," Jonathan clarifies. "Interactivity cannot always be scheduled precisely. We probably could have finished by then, but without feedback from the testers." They both credit the company with the patience to let them put the finishing touches on the product.

The efficacy of this process is in evidence everywhere in the product. At one point the lead character disguises himself in a large piece of squishy tofu with a mask carved into it and pays a visit to a tribe of 'Vegetarian Cannibals.' They sacrifice one of their members, dressed as a zucchini, into a volcano, proclaiming all the while that he is "high in fiber and low in trans-fatty acids."

The animation is smooth and fun (especially in the cut scenes) and it is a joy to walk through the environments. The game has been selected by the major review magazines *PC Gamer* and *Computer Gaming World* as adventure game of the year.

Getting a Life

Larry and Jonathan both emphasize that during the pre-production process, it was critical for the production team to balance their lives and their work. With the exception of the final two months, they actually managed to work normal hours and have lives. Jonathan has since married the woman he used to call at LucasArts while unemployed. "There is a diminishing return to getting your team to work crazy hours," he asserts, an atypical attitude for a programmer. "I write bugs when I'm tired."

Suggestions for gags and ideas came from literally everyone in the producing team, including the test department.

"I got into some bad habits because I was single," Larry agrees, recalling his late hours when he started at LucasArts. "Getting better at planning was the next step so we could have real lives." Still, he points out that Marc Overney and the animation team took a fierce pride in the product and recapitulated Larry's 'bad habits.' "I hope we're getting a handle on it," Larry sighs and pauses. "Still, if you're going to spend two years on a project, you want to be sure that it's good."

As of this writing, Larry Ahern and Jonathan Ackley are working on their next project. They have their cards close to the chest about the nature of it, not even discussing it with friends and colleagues. "If someone begins discussing a similar idea with us, we avoid going to his house," Larry



The vegetarian cannibals in a scene from *The Curse of Monkey Island*. © LucasArts.

smiles. "We can't even go into his neighborhood."

Click Your Heels Three Times

At one point in his career, Jonathan Ackley left LucasArts to go work for a firm that was once the darling of the interactive world, Rocket Science. Once there, however, it became clear that the programmers programmed and the writers wrote, and never the twain shall meet. He came back to LucasArts in short order. "I just assumed that everyone worked the way LucasArts does, because it makes sense," he shrugs. "Then, in the cold light of reality, I realized something. There is no place like LucasArts."

Note: The on-line version of this article contains a sample page from LucasArts' production book for *The Curse of Monkey Island*. <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.12/2.12pages/2.12bekinslucas.html>

Russell Bekins is a writer and media and story analyst working in Hollywood. He has worked for such film companies as MGM, Tri-Star, CAA and labored mightily (not to mention fruitlessly) as a development executive at Disney-based Tidewater Entertainment. Most recently, he has written for a satirical web site, Betacapsule.com, detailing the despair of a small high-tech company.

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Maurice Noble: Animation's "Old Rebel"

by Karl Cohen

*Editors Note: Whatever you do, don't call him a 'veteran.' At 87, Maurice Noble is the second oldest person working in the Hollywood animation industry (somebody at Disney is a year older than Noble and Chuck Jones is slightly younger so Noble calls him "Junior"), but his ideas, high energy and enthusiasm are that of a much younger man. We recently visited Maurice at his home in the hills north of Los Angeles, where he lives with his wife, Marjorie. His unpublished autobiography, co-written with Robert McKinnon, is titled *Stepping Into The Picture*, a fitting title which refers to Noble's immersive approach to design. He is currently developing for television or home video *Noble Tales*, a series of seven-minute animated cartoons which he describes as "folktales from around the world told with a modern slant." When he's not working on *Noble Tales* in his home studio, meeting with development partners, or making appearances at various animation events, Maurice can be found doing one of his many talks with staff artists at studios such as Walt Disney Feature Animation, Walt Disney Television Animation and DreamWorks Feature Animation. "I don't give lectures," he said, "I give conversations." Maurice Noble was recently interviewed by Cartoon Network for a program called *The 50 Greatest Cartoons Of All Time*, which will air on the U.S. cable channel on March 14 and 15, 1998. Just in time for our special issue on *The Art of Pre-Production*, Karl Cohen has brought*

us this interview about Maurice's career, covering the 'background' of one of the industry's legendary, but not yet 'veteran,' background designers.

Why is Maurice Noble considered a legend? Noble worked for Disney on *Snow White*, *Bambi*, *Fantasia* and *Dumbo*. During WWII, he worked for the Frank Capra film unit with Dr. Seuss on *Private Snafu* cartoons. In the 1950s he did the designs and layouts for Chuck Jones' greatest classic cartoons including *Duck Amuck*, *Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2*

Century, *What's Opera, Doc?* and the ever-popular *Roadrunner* cartoons.

The self-proclaimed "old rebel" attended Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles with the help of a work scholarship. One of the first honors of his life was the school awarding him and Mary Blair their first full-time scholarships. She stayed on and graduated, but he eventually had to leave due to financial difficulties caused by "the great depression."

First Stop: Disney

About 1934, Noble took a job at Disney to get a U.S. \$10 raise. He was working as a department store designer for \$90 a month when he was offered a job at the studio for about \$100. He said, "After all \$10 is \$10. I didn't know exactly what I was getting into, but I was going to earn \$10 more a month."

The studio knew he was skilled with watercolors as Chouinard had presented a one-man show of his work. Noble believes this was the first watercolor show to be presented by the school. In any case Disney put him to work doing watercolor backgrounds for their Silly Symphonies. He recalled doing backgrounds for *Elmer Elephant* (1936),



Maurice Noble with his awards from ASIFA-Hollywood and the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Union. February, 1998. Photo © 1998 Animation World Network.

The Country Cousin (1936), *Woodland Cafe* (1937), *The Old Mill* (1937), *Wynken, Blynken and Nod* (1938), and many other shorts before he started work on *Snow White*.

On a different note, another important moment for him was making the decision to go out on strike against Walt...

The background materials used at Disney were Winsor Newton watercolors and Whatman paper stretched on boards. No opaque paints or airbrush were permitted, not even to make a minor correction. He said, "A light pencil drawing was put onto the stretched paper by a tracer. Then we would look at the layouts given to us and interpret the shadows and other details. Then we would paint the backgrounds. It was a very long and painstaking process because we had to build up our colors wash after wash. When we got on *Snow White* we had to match six scenes in transparent watercolors in some sequences." One section of *Snow White* where he had to do six matching background paintings was a sequence in the interior of the dwarf's cottage. He had to paint

He was assigned to the film unit headed by Major Theodore Geisel, a man known to his readers as Dr. Seuss.

the same wall and props from six different camera angles. When the action cuts from one point of view to the next, the background paintings had to look the same. And they did.

An especially memorable scene that he worked on was the moment when the Prince kisses

Snow White. Walt was rushing the film to completion so Noble said he was designing and laying out the scene while he was painting it.

As a background artist Noble didn't have to suffer through the famous "sweatbox sessions," where Disney critiqued what was being worked on by his animators. However, he often attended these screenings to learn how his backgrounds worked with figures over them and to see what was going on.

Background artists at Disney had to go through a different form of torture, "the OK session." Noble said some of the sessions were experiences similar to nervous breakdowns. "A critical jury had to pass on all the finished backgrounds. You know how difficult it is to make corrections with watercolors?"

One of the great moments of his career at Disney was attending the premiere of *Snow White*. He said it was a miracle that he got screen credit on the film and was given two tickets by Walt to attend the premiere. "That was a real thrill and a highlight of my life. It was interesting to watch the audience. All the movie stars were there. I wasn't sitting downstairs with the hoi polloi, but I had a front row seat in the balcony. When the picture was over they all stood up and cheered. It was really exciting. Walt's folly had paid off! A million and a quarter dollars had been put into this cartoon. It was a real turning point in the animation business."

On a different note, another important moment for him was making the decision to go out on strike against Walt, "because I didn't believe that the wages being paid to beginners and some people who had been in the industry a long time were sufficient to live on," he said. Noble recalled how some peo-

ple who went on strike lost their cars and homes. He also remembered soup kitchens for the strikers and the Disney goon squads who went looking for trouble. He said, "the strike was a very difficult period."

Eventually, the strikers won their long and difficult battle with the studio, but when he went back to work things had changed. None of the people who had remained loyal to the company would talk with him. His new office was a former broom closet and he had to stand on a chair to reach the window if he wanted to open it. The studio didn't give him any work to do so when he reported each day he would read while waiting to get an assignment. Two or three weeks later he was laid off for lack of work. A few weeks after that, Pearl Harbor was bombed and three days later he made the decision to join the Army Signal Corps.

Part of Noble's brilliance is his use of strong simple shapes to define the spaces where the animation is to take place.

The War Years

Noble's war years were spent in the Army Photographic Signal Corp. He joined at the request of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Part of the time he traveled to different bases and helped present showings of films produced for soldiers by Colonel Frank Capra. Eventually he was transferred to Capra's command at Fort Fox in Los Angeles. He was assigned to the film unit headed by Major Theodore Geisel, a man known to his readers as Dr. Seuss. There were about 12 men in the unit. "We turned out propaganda booklets, health things, VD posters,

'don't trust the enemy' type posters, maps for Capra's films, and the Snafu cartoons."

When Noble was asked to describe Geisel he replied, "He was very neat, slender, beady-eyed and wore his hair quite closely cropped." I then asked if he was a funny person and the response was, "Oh no! Ted was never a funny person. There were no yuck yuck yucks to this guy. He was all business. He had a sense of humor and a keen sense of story as demonstrated in his children's books, but he struck me as a rather serious person. I knew him for many years and worked with him on a good number of his pictures."

Noble said, "I'm often asked the question if we knew we were working on great cartoons and the answer is no, we had a job."

He continues, "In later years when I worked with him he was always well-dressed, polished shoes, cashmere sweaters, and stuff like that. I would say that he was a very reserved person, not much laughter. As a matter of fact I can't ever remember hearing Ted laugh. Of course, we were dealing with the serious business of story and picture development. He was a perfectionist. Every drawing, every bit of dialog had to be just right. I appreciated that because I'm a little bit that way myself." Noble is glad to have had the privilege of working with Ted over the years.

At Ted Geisel's memorial service his doctor told Noble that Ted really loved *How The Grinch Stole Christmas* (1966), especially his work on it. Noble said, "he never mentioned it while he was alive." The compliment meant a lot to him as he considers the television spe-

cial one of his best works. He was glad finally to learn the author shared this opinion.

When Noble got out of the Army, he didn't have a job. He lived at home with his mother and took whatever freelance work was available.

Eventually, he took a full-time job in St. Louis working for a company doing film strips for the Lutheran Church and other clients. When Warner Bros. contacted him in 1952 and asked if he wanted to do layouts for Chuck Jones, he happily returned to Hollywood.

Maurice barely knew Chuck Jones during WWII. They had met briefly when he visited Warner Bros. on official business. The Snafu cartoons were written and story-boarded at Fort Fox and then the materials were sent to Warner Bros. to be produced. Jones was one of the directors working on the Snafu cartoon series that was being made for the guys in the Army.

The Chuck Jones Era Begins

When Noble joined Chuck Jones' unit, "it was a very hectic period. I had never laid out a picture in my life. When you go into a new place you don't want to display your ignorance so I just had to figure things out. I looked around and saw what everybody was doing." He had to learn how they used exposure sheets at Warners, all of their technical vocabulary, etc. "Little by little I taught myself how to do layouts." He adds that he was very fortunate to work at Warners with a lot of people who helped him develop his skills, including back-



In the 1960s, Noble worked at MGM with Chuck Jones on *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Photo courtesy of and © MGM Home Entertainment.

ground artist Phil DeGuard, and animators Benny Washam and Ken Harris.

Part of Nobles brilliance is his use of strong simple shapes to define the spaces where the animation is to take place. He was able to create unique designs for each film on which he worked. Jones let him develop whatever designs and looks he thought would work best with the animated action being planned for the project.

Nobles layouts in the 1950s avoided the fussy details of Disney and the over-designed look of UPA. He said the look of his layouts were not influenced by what was happening at UPA. Instead they were simply his personal feelings about what would work best with the project on which he was working. He began to feel comfortable at Warners when he "started to design stuff and they liked it." When asked if he designed the amazing landscapes in these films, or if the concepts were those of his background artist Phil de Guard, he said, "I designed everything. I not only gave Phil the layout, but the color sketches as well. I designed the pictures. He had to copy my sky, my colors, everything." In the book *Duck Amuck*, Chuck Jones calls Maurice Noble the architect and Phil

de Guard the builder of the back-grounds in his films.

Noble explained that those wonderfully strange cliffs and pointed spires, with rocks balancing on the tops of them, in Roadrunner cartoons are exaggerations of his childhood memories of the desert. He grew up in New Mexico and visited Monument Valley, Zion, the Grand Canyon, and other National Parks as a youngster. He said he loved doing desert settings for cartoons. Each time he would do one they would become more exaggerated. He loved to balance big rocks on spires or on top of small ones and said, "I did it for the fun of the thing. It became Roadrunner country."

Noble said, "I'm often asked the question if we knew we were working on great cartoons and the answer is no, we had a job." He looks back on his career and is amazed at the quality of the work Chuck Jones' unit produced, but he maintains that the unit simply thought of their work as a job. He describes the group as "a basic crew of 10 or 12 people who turned out 11 cartoons a year from beginning to end." Noble feels something's been lost in today's approach to animation production, with "too many cooks in the kitchen." He said, "It's silly to have a whole crew develop a picture, then send it over to another crew, with a director who will change things." Noble is currently working with about 10 artists on *Noble Tales*.

Fond Memories

When asked if he could add to the discussion about where that brilliance came from he said, "I've often said Mike Maltese enjoyed writing the stuff. I can remember watching Chuck chuckling over his drawings - making Daffy do something silly, or insane or insulting. I

enjoyed designing the stuff. The animators enjoyed drawing the stuff and Phil enjoyed painting it. It all kind of rubbed off on the audience... We worked like demons."

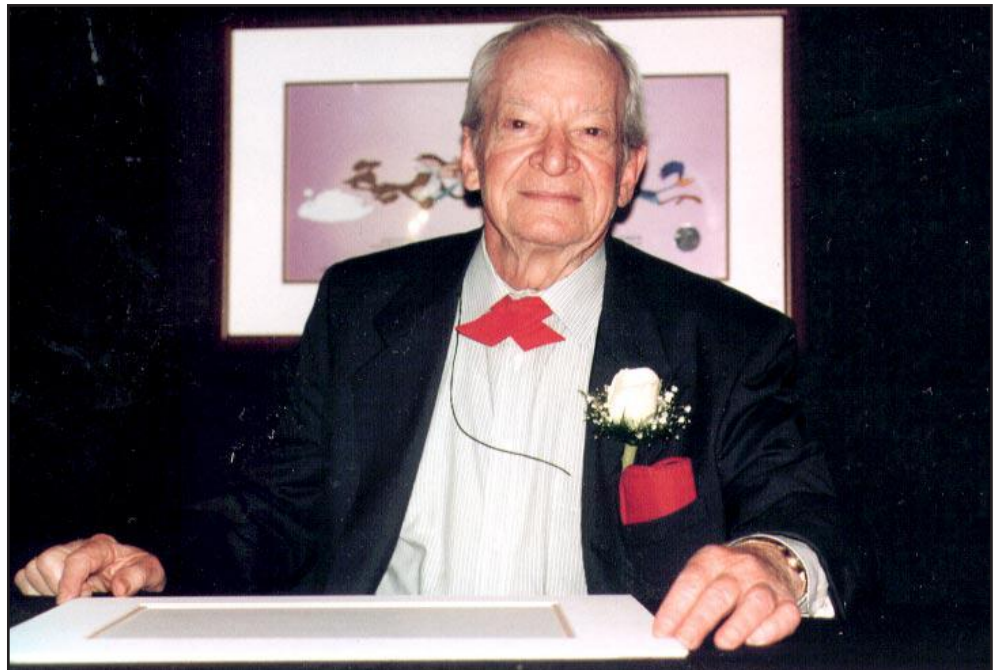
Creative animation people in Hollywood really want to do something good and their frustration comes from being handed scripts that are verbal, not visual.

Later in the interview he returned to the topic of what made their unit great. He said, "Chuck had a great ability to direct his characters. He did all his character sketches." He also praised three animators, Ken Harris, Ben Washam and Abe Levitow, who were capable of understanding Chuck's notes to them on the drawings about timing and other nuances and were able to turn Chuck's ideas into remarkable performances. He is proud that he was part of Jones' small unit and that their work is now recognized as some of the best from the Golden Age of animation.

Despite all the stories that have been told over the years about the gang at Termite Terrace having fun on the job, Noble said most of the time it was serious work for him and the people around him. Life among his co-workers was very informal and there were gags, in the form of comic drawings, floating around.

Among his fond memories are the lunches cooked by Ben ("Benny") Washam for the group. Noble said that once in a while on Fridays Benny would pass the hat and then go out and buy some provisions. It turns out that Washam was an original partner in the Bobs Big Boy restaurants. He quit and became an animator because he didn't make much money in the food business.

Another happy memory concerns writer Mike Maltese who Noble described as having a good wry sense of humor. Noble said they were very good friends and would go antique-hunting together. As he talked he looked around the room and pointed out a chest and other



Maurice Noble frequently makes guest appearances at animation art signings around the country. Photo by Robert McKinnon, courtesy of Maurice Noble.

things that reminded him of his adventures with Maltese.

At Warners only a few cartoons were ever given official premieres, most just opened at downtown theaters without any fanfare. The studio made a big deal out of the premiere of *What's Opera, Doc?* because it was the only cartoon to use a 50-piece orchestra. The event was held at a theater on the studio lot. He doesn't remember who was in the audience, but he recalled the red curtain parting and that it was wonderful to see this great parody on the screen. "It was a big event. I was quite surprised that when I saw the picture that it turned out to be such a grand tour de force."

Noble was at Warners when the studio closed Termite Terrace and opened a new studio built for the animators on their back lot in Burbank. Beforehand, the site had been a trash pile. After the studio ended animation production the building became a music library and a computer center, among other

things before it became Chuck Jones' studio.

Maurice and Chuck

Noble describes his relationship with Chuck Jones as strictly business. It was between two men who still have enormous respect for each other's abilities and a recognition that their skills complement each other's talents. Noble had co-director credit with Jones on several Warner Brother cartoons in the 1960s. He said, "I owe a great deal to Chuck because he let me do my own thing. We got to do a lot of very interesting pictures together."

In essence animation is about satire, exaggeration, puns and poking fun at human foibles.

Noble's relationship with Chuck was "nothing social." He would attend parties for the whole unit at Chuck's house, "but never any lunches or socializing... It was

strictly a business relationship and that's probably why we could work together for so long. I'd say good night and he would say good night and that was it."

Jones praises Noble's brilliance as a layout artist in the book *Duck Amuck*. Among the fine things Chuck Jones had to say about Maurice is the statement, "He never showed off, but he showed up every other layout man I have ever known by his honesty, his devotion to his craft, and above all, his devotion to the film at hand, and this is nowhere more vividly demonstrated than in *What's Opera, Doc?*"

The Present

Maurice worked at Chuck Jones Productions until the early '90s. He then went onto *Cats Don't Dance* at Turner Feature Animation, where he was reunited with his former assistant, Don Morgan, who he had worked with 35 years before, on *Grinch* and *Horton* at MGM. Noble also received a Winsor

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McKay Lifetime Achievement Annie Award from ASIFA-Hollywood in 1995.

Noble presently works as a consultant for several Hollywood companies. He is called in to critique a lot of work. He said, "I check it out with the young artists. I try to suggest where they can make improvements. I work with young directors. We talk over story and story points. In other words I'm the old guru."

When asked about the training of young talent today he said, "The Warner Bros. Feature Animation Development Department has a very competent training program. They have classes, not only in animation, but in layout and other basics. They also teach improvisation so the students can spontaneously react to things. A good animator is always a kind of actor. They also hold life drawing classes 3 or 4 times a week. In other words they are improving all their skills. I've talked with the heads of the training department and they say the studio can't find enough experienced help so we are going to develop it ourselves."

One point that he stated several times is, "the studios are cursed with live-action writers. They don't have the visual writers. You say a lot of things in words that you can do in one drawing. They don't realize this. Recent features contain a tremendous amount of unnecessary dialog and situations that don't really present themselves in a graphic way. This is the curse of all the studios."

He blames the controlling interests in the studios for wanting to do blockbuster type films and wanting to make millions of dollars. He feels that creative animation people in Hollywood really want to do something good and their frustration comes from being handed

scripts that are verbal, not visual. "They don't explore the graphic potential of animation," he said.

Another problem he talked about is the present fascination with computers. "The way they are using this computerized stuff is the difference between a lathe and a hand carving. The computer is a tool. When they over emphasize it like they did in the *Hunchback* you feel like you are on a roller coaster ride all the time." Talking about the growing use of computers in animation production, Noble said, "There's a difference between punching a button and drawing. The computers a wonderful tool, but you can't *animate* with it." However, Maurice noted that a computer would have been useful in the production of the 1965 Academy Award-winning film, *The Dot and the Line*, which he worked on with Chuck Jones. "We did that with drawings, reversal film and tinting," he recalled of the complexly simple, geometric film.

"I know it's very difficult to find a good story to animate, but they shouldn't be throwing millions of dollars around to produce these so called epics; *Gone With the Wind* animated features. Story comes first. Every frame should push the story. There are so many good possibilities in animation. I'm sure there are good stories to be found. Why do they insist upon 'the cutting edge'? What do they mean by it? In essence animation is about satire, exaggeration, puns and poking fun at human foibles. Real good adult humor is subtle humor. A good, fun, zany satire is wonderful. This is the field animation should work in instead of being bad live-action."

One producer that Noble admires is Bill Melendez. He said, "Bill Melendez has stuck to his simple approach to things. I think his

simple animation, his very direct simple dialog, his simple backgrounds and the choice use of the little guy at the piano here and there result in a very consistent product. Melendez is a very keen guy. He is one of my favorite people." Noble considers *A Charlie Brown Christmas* (1965) one of the nicest things ever put on film.

Noble concluded by saying, "I'm known as the old rebel. I'm invited to come talk here and there. I keep preaching the idea of full animation. Go easy on the computer. Lets have stories and graphics and satire and fun. The general level of acceptance of inferior animation is unfortunate. Look at some of the subtle animation done years ago. My favorite picture is *Dumbo*. It is so complete. Not a bit of wasted footage. It runs the gamete from tears to outrageous slapstick with the crows. Each section is so well done. The business needs more cartoons like this. *Dumbo* is a classic."

"The whole thing is geared to have fun and not to be too serious. That is the essence of what made a cartoon fun in the old days. Its not old hat. A good laugh is a good laugh whether its an old one or a new one. Its just how you do it. I've been very lucky to have had so much fun."

Karl Cohen is President of ASIFA-San Francisco. His first book, Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators, has recently been published by McFarland Publishers. He also teaches animation history at San Francisco State University.

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Paper:

There's More To It Than You Think

by Steven Hagel

With all the talk and hype concerning the latest digital technologies emerging to 'revolutionize' animation, we may be overlooking the most important component of the entire process - the paper we draw on. More specifically, the animation paper we draw on.

When it comes to defining what is and is not a 'true' animation paper, opinion varies. I might add that this variety of opinion is matched only by the number of people surveyed! Over the past three and a half years I have made it my mission to learn exactly what it takes to make a great animation paper. Now I am going to share my enlightenment with you. Before I begin, I want to thank the numerous artists who have helped me along this journey. Without their input the quest for this grail would likely have eluded me.

A High Wire Balancing Act

How 'heavy' will the sheet be? What type of surface treatments will it have? Will the sheet be 'rough' or 'smooth'? How will it erase? How will it accept pencil lines? Will it smudge? How translucent is the sheet? What color will it be? How well will it stand up to rough handling? These, and many more questions, are important to answer when talking about a 'true' animation paper.

Each of these characteristics will mean something different to each artist. For example, the drawing style of animators has a 'looser' feel to the drawing which may lend itself to a different set of surface treatments for their paper. A clean-up artist may want a sheet that pro-

duces a 'tight,' dark line that does not smudge easily. Translucency and 'toughness' may be important to inbetweeners who have to 'flip' or roll the sheets of paper extensively. And so it goes on...

When it comes to defining what is and is not a 'true' animation paper, opinion varies.

Dispelling Myths About Paper

The first myth I want to dispel is the one that says, "Paper is paper. What's the big deal?" To the contrary, paper is not just paper, especially when it comes to animation! The raw materials, the techniques and the secrets behind making paper are as guarded to the paper makers as would be the story for the next animated blockbuster! Paper makers have reputations built upon their processes and products and ruthlessly protect the integrity of these processes and products. The skill of the paper maker can be likened to that of any master craftsman whose wisdom and vision separate the inferior from the superior product. Much of my education about paper making has been bestowed upon me by some of the top paper makers in the United States and I have grown truly to appreciate their craft. Paper making is not an exact science and I am always in awe of a paper maker's ability to reproduce a standard product literally 'from scratch' time after time.

The second myth I would like to dispel is that, 'Any paper will work for animation, just as long as you can see through it.' To the

'uncultured' pencil of the masses, this theory may be true but to the trained and refined pencil of the professional animator, layout artist, inbetweeners, effects artist or clean-up artist, these words could not be further from the truth. In fact, I have had conversations with artists who have been able to detect the slightest nuances between different papers. It is just this type of discerning taste that made me believe that 'just any paper' would not be good enough for animation and that an ideal set of characteristics could be combined to produce a great animation paper.

Setting On My Journey

I am sure a lot of you have drawn on different kinds of paper and have found one or more characteristics about each paper pleasing but others may have been less than ideal. Having done this you may have wondered why someone couldn't combine all of the great features of the papers you'd tried while eliminating the undesirable ones. Well, you're not alone and it has been tried with varying degrees of success. Many different types of "animation papers" exist in the market today and are used by amateurs, independents and professionals across the world. But are they really what they claim to be?

Apart from the skill of the paper maker and the discerning tastes of artists, what really constitutes a good animation paper? Let's talk about what characteristics set one paper apart from another and how each of these relate specifically to animation.

Before we begin, the one concept that you must understand

to appreciate fully what constitutes a good quality paper is that 'cause and affect' really comes into play when you set out to tailor the desirable characteristics of a paper. Unfortunately, every 'ideal' characteristic cannot be included in the paper simply because each of the major characteristics affect one another in some way. Generally, this affect happens to be the opposite of the one desired and some sacrifices must ultimately be made to find the best possible paper.

I am always in awe of the paper maker's ability to reproduce a standard product literally 'from scratch' time after time.

The Foundation

When it comes to the 'meat and potatoes' of paper, the basic recipe of what goes into the paper's construction determines a number of different tendencies for the sheet. Is the paper made from all virgin material or does it contain a component of recycled material? What is the ratio of hardwood and softwood pulps in the paper? Are there any fillers in the sheet and what purpose do they serve? Depending upon what you are trying to achieve, the raw material mix is a critical consideration. The pulp mixture could be considered the 'foundation' of the paper and what happens to the sheet after this could be considered the 'framing and finishing' touches to the final structure.

Since every sound building is built upon a strong foundation, let's inspect the foundation a little closer to see if we can find any cracks.

Although recycling is the 'in-thing', it's not when it comes to making specialty papers designed for an application such as animation. Before you lose your faith in me for not protecting nature let me explain myself. I believe in recycling but

recycled paper has characteristics that do not lend themselves well for use as an animation paper. Recycled pulp is made up of numerous different types of recovered paper products. Despite being processed back to a raw pulp, certain characteristics of the original products will remain consistent in the new end product. This is one of the reasons that certain recycled papers have such aesthetic appeal and value. Unfortunately, this random inconsistency is not desirable in animation paper. Consistency in both body formation and surface finishing are essentials when high quality line work is the desired end result. Further, with a lot of artwork going to scanning these days, a uniform appearance is key in allowing the scanner to pick up good lines with minimal 'background noise' from inconsistencies in the body of the sheet. People on the technology side who scan will relate to what I am saying.

Another important 'recipe decision' is the ratio of hardwood and softwood in the paper. What's the difference? That depends on what you're trying to achieve. Anybody who owns furniture made from oak or maple will appreciate how heavy it is and how well it resists scratches and dents. On the other hand anybody who owns pine furniture knows that it is lighter and dents easily. Hardwoods have a denser molecular structure than softwoods and this heavier density yields strikingly different characteristics from softwoods. Hardwood fibers are short and compact whereas softwood fibers are longer and looser. Taking the density comparison forward, hardwood fibers are more opaque than the less dense softwood fibers. The opacity or how 'translucent' the sheet is can also be determined by a number of factors. For the most part though, the translucency of the sheet is determined by the pulp mixture. Therefore, a paper with a higher

content of hardwood will be more opaque, or less translucent, than a paper made with a higher content of softwood. Fillers, depending upon what they are, can also influence the translucency of a paper. Basis weight, caliper thickness and color also play a role in determining a paper's opacity. Obviously, the thicker the sheet, the less translucent it will be relative to its make-up.

Other Factors

The ratio of hardwood and softwood in the paper also impacts the surface texture of the sheet. When papers are manufactured they are rolled, dried and 'calendered' or pressed to a specified thickness at the tail end of the manufacturing process. As hardwood fibers are shorter in length than softwood fibers, fewer of the fibers protrude from the surface of the finished sheet. In a similar way the longer softwood fibers, can protrude from the smooth finished surface of paper. The higher the softwood content, the more obstructions are present on the surface of the sheet. These obstructions can lead to excessive black 'spotting' that occurs in the path of a pencil line drawn on the sheet. Again, this may not strike anyone as important but users in animation from creative to technical require a consistent sheet in terms of performance. Spotty, inconsistent line work could cause slowdowns for each user in the process. Adjusting the ratio of woods used in designing the sheet can minimize these naturally occurring inconsistencies.

"With all the technology that is available and that we rely on ... it still comes down to just two things; a piece of paper and a pencil."

Color is an important consideration for both the artist and technologies used to commit the

'cleaned-up' drawings to the digital information used by an increasing number of studios for completing their films. From the artists point of view, color is a major issue when you consider the amount of time they look 'into the sheet' throughout the day - eye strain. A softer white or ivory tinted sheet lessens the effects of eye strain when compared to a stark, cold, white sheet. On the other hand, from technology's point of view, a cleaner and whiter sheet allows a greater contrast between the line work and the paper thus making the 'cleaning up' process of scanned drawings easier. As the actual line becomes a digital image, graphite is replaced with pixels. When the drawings are scanned a certain amount of gray scale may be reduced to remove unwanted 'noise' or smudging from the new digitized drawing. This reduction in gray scale could remove just enough pixels to open the lines that form the corners and intersections of the original drawings. These open 'polygons' can cause the digital ink and painters untold grief by not allowing easy flood filling of color.

Basis Weight, in pounds or grams, is the industry standard for measuring the weight classification of paper. Technically, it is determined by taking 500 sheets of the paper measuring 17 x 22 inches and weighing it on a certified scale. If you take standard 20 lb bond paper as an example, the 20 lb description is the basis weight of the paper: 500 sheets of this paper measuring 17 x 22 inches weigh 20 lbs. The basis weight, in turn, plays a determining factor in the 'caliper thickness' or, how 'heavy' the sheet is to the touch. As the basis weight increases so does the 'heaviness' of the paper.

The Surface

After we've built the 'foundation' for the sheet - that is we have found the ideal mix of pulp

and filler components, decided upon the basis weight, sheet thickness and color - it becomes time to 'furnish' or finish the surface of the paper. Surface texture, or 'roughness,' is possibly the most important factor to consider when it comes to finishing the paper for animation. There is however one problem that must be overcome if the paper is to become a success as an animation paper. How rough is 'too rough' and how smooth is 'too smooth?' This is probably the most difficult aspect of the paper to construct. The reason for this difficulty lies with the different end users of the paper. Layout and storyboard artists, along with animators and inbetweeners, may prefer a 'rougher' sheet to complement their style. Clean-up and effects artists may prefer a 'smoother' sheet that produces darker, richer line work with minimal smudging. The challenge becomes finding the perfect compromise between smoothness and roughness.

"As in all professions, the best results require the best tools."

The erasability of the sheet is another important factor. Animation is an intense process requiring a great deal of durability from the paper. Multiple erasures are commonplace. The paper must not only be able to erase 'cleanly,' it must endure excessive erasing and still be able to 'hold a line' as well as it did when the drawing was first started. Erasability is the sum of numerous factors but the furnishing of the sheet is critical.

'Re-pegging' of drawings is also quite common. The original registration is often torn off the drawing and the drawing re-pegged. This makes how well the paper tears in a straight line an important consideration. How well a paper tears is a characteristic determined not only by the 'foundation,' but also by the quality of

the manufacturing process used by the paper maker.

Is It Archival and Acid Free?

We have all heard the words 'acid free' or 'archival' when it comes to art materials or picture framing materials. Should an animation paper be archival? That depends...

Basically, paper is made from wood and fillers. Wood has naturally occurring chemical properties which, in some cases, lead to natural degradation of paper products. Lignin is one such chemical property. Other chemicals enter the sheet through the manufacturing process. Sulfur and chlorine are two such chemicals that can lead to degradation of the paper.

During the manufacturing process other chemicals in the form of liquid solutions or dry fillers can be added to eliminate the presence of these and other unwanted substances in the paper. Certain solutions can be added to eliminate chemicals within the sheet while other products can be added to not only eliminate the internal chemicals but also to act as a shield or barrier against attack from external chemicals. The former creates what is commonly called 'acid free' while the latter creates what is known as 'archival' paper. The primary difference between the two is the expected longevity of the sheet. Acid free papers can have spans of up to 40 or 50 years before they begin to degrade while archival papers can have life expectancies reaching up to 150 to 200 years!

Is having an acid free or archival paper important to animation? I believe it is for at least two reasons. First, the true art form of animation is the drawing. The drawings are valuable both for financial reasons to the studios and collectors, but also for the historical preservation of today's 'digital,' cel-less films and as a reference tool from which future animators can learn.

There is no question that in

today's burgeoning collector marketplace, animation has become one of the hottest collectibles available. Original animation drawings can fetch thousands of dollars through private sales and public auctions. Studios are discovering the market value of the artwork used to produce their films and want to preserve its integrity as a commodity.

Disney Feature Animation has taken extensive steps to preserve the animation, backgrounds, layouts and cels from past features. The Animation Research Library catalogues and stores, by film and by scene, the available animation from Disney's rich history of animated films. The work is made available to current Disney staffers to aid in the development of today's films and is occasionally put on display for the benefit of the animation community and the public at large. Disney has expressed a desire to incorporate archival features into their animation paper to ensure that future generations of both artists and historians will be able to benefit from the work of today's artists just as these artists have been able to benefit from the delicate lessons of the likes of Frank and Ollie.

An Expert's Opinion

As I draw this article to a close I would like to provide thoughts and feelings from one of your peers Marty Korth, Lead Key at Warner Bros. Feature Animation, previously with Disney Feature Animation. "In traditional animation, with all the technology that is available and that we rely on to help us create animated movies it still comes down to just two things: a piece of paper and a pencil," he says.

"If the tools that we use are less than ideal, we are held back from being able to attain our goal. Our goal is that our work will be transformed from mere drawings into actual living, breathing, real cartoon characters; hopefully as real as any living being or creature.

Therefore, not just any paper will do. Each department in animation has its own special demands and requirements expected from the paper. As a clean-up artist or assistant animator, it is our drawings that the audience sees on the screen. Of course, we work directly with the animators and it is their rough drawings that determine the timing, acting, staging and storytelling. Our drawings must accurately reflect the animators' work and must be precise and beautiful to watch. The qualities that we require from our paper are:

Durability

"We flip several drawings at a time, back and forth to sync them together and to follow the flow of action. Also, the paper must hold up to being erased and still be able to accept a clean pencil line.

Opacity

"We frequently use a light placed below the drawings to see several drawings simultaneously. For our purposes we want to see through each drawing to the one below but *not* to the degree of tracing paper. The paper must have a limited degree of opacity.

Color

"The color of the paper is important. It must not be harsh and 'cold,' but 'friendly,' off-white, warm and conducive to working with the artists, not against them.

Finish

"The way the paper accepts the graphite is for the artist probably the most important and personal issue. It's hard enough to do the drawing in the first place but if the actual experience of drawing becomes an experience of frustration, the artist can become demoralized and the difficulty of his or her job is compounded.

Aesthetics

"Our goal is to create an

appealing drawing. We need the paper to cooperate with us towards that end."

The feelings that Marty discusses are, as I have found, fairly universal among artists in the industry.

When you start to consider all of these different conditions and preferences the existence of an 'ideal' animation paper may seem improbable. True, it can be difficult to find an ideal 'off the shelf' paper whose characteristics fit all of these unique requirements. However, the marketplace does contain papers that have been painstakingly designed with the input of professional artists from each of the disciplines unique to animation. If you're still not convinced that an 'animation paper' has something special to offer, try some and see for yourself what a difference it can make to your craft. As Marty said, "As in all professions, the best results require the best tools." Perhaps trying or switching to a professional grade of animation paper can be the step that elevates your work to the next level.

Steven Hagel is the Sales and Marketing Manager for Chromacolour International Limited. He was directly responsible for the development and introduction of Chromacolour's ProGrade and ProGrade 'Plus' lines of Animation Paper. Steven was recently awarded the 'E Award' for Quality Enhancement by Venture Magazine in Canada for the development of the animation papers in addition to other products Chromacolour has introduced into the animation marketplace over the last five years.

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

Creating Music and Imagery Together

by Kirsten Winter

S*mash* is my second film in collaboration with the Russian-Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin (born in 1957). The first time I met her in the fall of 1993, she was composing a piece of music commissioned by the ZKM (Center for Arts and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany) for Multimediale 3, an arts festival, which took place in November, 1993 in Karlsruhe.

After listening to her kind of modern classical music for hours I was bewildered: on one hand the music appeared pretty strange to my 'uneducated' ear, on the other hand I was really fascinated by something I cannot precisely describe. Maybe it was the contrast between her shy and reserved appearance and the strength and power of her music.

We decided to work together. I received permission from the composer, the commissioner, the performers and the conductor to use part of the music which was performed by the Ensemble Modern of Frankfurt, Germany during 1993's Multimediale 3.

Our First Film: *Clocks*

The result of our collaboration was *Clocks*, an animated short film which offers an impression of Elena's working life. Accompanied by her own music, we see Elena com-

posing, at the piano, and in a dialogue with Richard Toop (musicologist), Daryl Pratt (percussionist) and Elizabeth Burton (dancer). Sometimes the film leaves her and focuses on the music entirely by using abstract paintings. The viewer becomes the listener. Since I used a piece of already composed and performed music, the structure was assigned to me and it was my duty to support the music by using images in a way no one would recognize that the music had come first.

The viewer becomes the listener.

It worked as I had intended ... more or less. (*Prizes were won in: Montreal, Canada; Espinho in Portugal; Krok in the Ukraine and the Art Award of Lower Saxony in Germany, additionally it received several special mentions, The Editors.*)

Although (or because of?)



Elena Kats-Chernin is pictured in the film *Clocks*, her first collaboration with Kirsten Winter. © Kirsten Winter.



Filmmaker Kirsten Winter has worked with composer Elena Kats-Chernin on two animated films, *Clocks* and *Smash*. © Kirsten Winter

we occasionally argued, mainly about artistic topics, Elena and I became good friends and a productive team with our opinions generally harmonizing quite well. Therefore, we decided to collaborate a second time. The 'success' of *Clocks* made it comparatively easy to get grants, not only from Germany, but also from Australia. We also received support from ZKM, the Studio For Experimental Music in Freiburg, and Ensemble Modern for the next film, *Smash*.

Sound is as important as the imagery

SMASH: The Non-Linear Story

As Don Perro wrote in his review (November issue of *Animation World Magazine*, <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.8/2.8pages/2.8perrosmash.html>), *Smash* is concerned with the 'days in a life;' especially the days in my life before they resulted in a near fatal



Kirsten Winter at work, using oil paints to transform photographs into art for her animated films. © Kirsten Winter

automobile accident. *Smash* doesn't describe my life literally, but is based on my experiences. I also figured out, after screening *Smash* several times, it is not only my experience, but it could be anyone's experience who is involved in an intense, busy career.

As Don mentioned, *Smash* is not a clear, linear story. My aim was to find a way to tell a story by creating feelings while watching the screen. I prefer not an intellectual

but an emotional reaction to a film. This was one of the reasons I chose to edit the film as I did. I started fast and increased the pace until by the end of the first third, it is frame by frame. No one can recognize every frame, only the rhythm. Although I used concrete, real images as a base for my oil paintings, I treated the material, the rhythm, like I was making an 'abstract' film.

In a review the melody Elena composed was called, 'Frühstücksmusik' or 'breakfast music' which, I think, describes it quite suitably.

When I send my film to festivals I add the following summary: "In the daily cycle, even the transfigured images of the apparently 'ideal' life lose their appeal. Severed

from their original content, they develop a dynamic of their very own, which inevitably leads to a *Smash*, to a breakdown. An 'after' with its own qualities evolves - until the cycle threatens to form again."

The Production

For *Smash* Elena and I worked together from the very beginning to the end. Our aim was to produce a congenial film. On one hand sometimes the images support the sound and sometimes the sound supports the music. However, on the other hand both kinds of art are used diametrically. Sound is as important as the imaginary. I told Elena my idea for the film and tried to give her an impression of the mood, images and basic structure I intended to create.

The CD, which was recorded just for my use, formed the basis for shooting, and later editing, the film.

I joined her for about nine weeks (June to August 1996) in Sydney, Australia, where we refined the structure together. Moreover, we listened to the sounds that Elena developed, created and collected predominately during her stay in Germany (1981-1994). We were looking for a melody which reflects the 'daily life-cycle.' In a review the melody Elena composed was called, 'Frühstücksmusik' or 'breakfast music' which, I think, describes it quite suitably.

After we'd roughly got it blocked out, I went back to Germany to tend to the visuals, while Elena was composing. The only thing fixed at the time was the rhythm which was necessary for me

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A still from *Smash*. © Kirsten Winter.

to start shooting the footage. Several VHS and music tapes were sent back and forth between Australia and Germany before Elena came to Karlsruhe, Germany in early November, 1996.

In the meantime it was decided that *Clocks* and *Smash* would be screened in both the Concert Hall in Vienna, Austria and the Old Opera in Frankfurt, Germany with live music performed by the Ensemble Modern - in April, 1997! This did not leave much time for animating a nine-minute short film.

The music for *SMASH* is formed by two distinct parts. One track features both natural and artificial sounds manipulated electronically and the other is a musical composition. The tape was produced at the ZKM and the musicians received their sheets of music to rehearse during November. Elena had to leave Germany to compose an opera in Sydney which premiered with praise in November, 1997. She came back to join the Ensemble Modern while recording the CD at the Studio For Experimental Music, Freiburg, Germany in December. During this and all of the following performances the sound effects tape and the music performed by Ensemble Modern were played simultaneously. The CD, which was recorded just for my use, formed

the basis for shooting, and later editing, the film.

Four Months Later

On April 16, I was in a film lab in Berlin, waiting for my first print. I then went directly to Frankfurt, where the Ensemble Modern, conducted by Jonathan Nott, rehearsed for the first time while actually watching the film.

Later, we went to Vienna where the first screening with live music took place in the Concert Hall on April 18, 1997. The next day *Clocks* and *Smash* were screened and performed in Munich and on April 22 in the Old Opera in Frankfurt. The first festival screening was during the World Film Festival in Montreal, on August 31, 1997.

Smash is available on DVD through *Short Film Journal* out of Venice, California. Call (310) 821 9843.

Kirsten Winter runs a film production company, which specializes in experimental animation. She recently created a short animated sequence for the Absolut Panushka web site. She is also a part-time lecturer for animation at the college of higher education in Hanover, Germany. She is involved in several film festivals and loves to leave Germany temporarily, in search of new inspirations and collaborations.

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And I Get Paid!?!: The Life of a Voice Actor

by Kath Soucie

I am delighted to have the opportunity to brag about what a great job I have. I absolutely *love* this part of the entertainment industry and, quite frankly, I'm feeling terribly clever for having stumbled across it in the first place. In the last few years, animation and voice-over have become a source of great interest to folks, but for quite some time it was a niche that was enjoyed and appreciated mostly by children. As the field has become more and more sophisticated and 'toons are more artfully executed, the entire subject has become far more mainstream.

It's a commonly held notion that there is only a small group of actors who do the great majority of voice-over work and I would like to say that, for the most part, it is true. I have spent the last 12 years of my life voice-over-wise in the company of pretty much the same band of thieves. I am very sincere when I say that they are among the most creative, interesting and hilariously wild artists around. We all agree that we have the absolute best job on Earth. Basically, you get to do all the stuff you got in trouble for in school ... and they pay you buckets of dough to do it. It's perfect!

In terms of the work itself, the variety is infinite. No two days are even remotely alike. If you are a fan of predictability, trust me, this is not the field for you. The structure of your week will change continuously, sometimes hourly, as your busy and frazzled agent tries to fit as much as possible into your schedule. You need to have a cell phone,

pager, voice mail - every possible form of communication available - because that leisurely two-job day that you were mildly looking forward to last night can become a seven-job, three-audition crunch within hours.

In addition to animation, there is an entirely different part to the business centered around advertising. This can include radio and television commercials, promos and narration. Most of us do a little of all these things and it can make for a very interesting mix in our day. In deciding how to go about giving you an idea of how a week really plays out for me, I felt it would be good to find one with the most variety and exciting projects. I settled on the last week of March, 1997.

It's a commonly held notion that there is only a small group of actors who do the great majority of voice-over work...

Getting Started: Monday

This week is of a particular interest because we began work on



Kath Soucie.

Rugrats, *The Movie*. It's been seven years since my first audition for the *Rugrats* which turned out to be one of those shows which took a while to become really popular. We've done tons of episodes through the years and being apart of this show is a privilege. It's full of all the exact ele-

ments...vision, imagination, clarity and sharpness of observation, tenderness and just the right amount of silliness.

The movie script is fine with a lot of fun scenes and plenty of opportunities to ad lib and let loose. And, yes, we are given the opportunity to add our own spin on things, contribute a few lines and alter a "bit" that doesn't seem quite authentic or true to character. This show has always been a completely collaborative effort, with almost zero ego on all fronts, and with the true intention to create something unique and pure.

The session goes well. All my faves are there: Christine Cavanaugh as Chuckie, E.G. Dailey as the heroic Tommy and Cheryl Chase as Angelica. I'm Phil, Lil & Betty. There is definitely a different feel in the booth. This is a feature after all, not just a lowly series.



Kath Soucie plays the voices of Cadpig and Rolly on Disney's *101 Dalmatians: The Series*, which airs in U.S. syndication and on ABC Saturday mornings. © Disney.

There's a different energy, higher stakes and better snacks! We're scheduled from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and we make good progress for our first session.

Rugrats is recorded in Hollywood which is about 20 minutes away from my next session at Hanna-Barbera Cartoons in North Hollywood. We will be recording two episodes of *Dexter's Laboratory* in which I play Dexter's mother and his computer, as well as, from time to time, several incidentals. Christine Cavanaugh also plays Dexter, so between *Rugrats* and *Dexter* we will pretty much be spending the entire day together. As I mentioned earlier it is not uncommon to see the same actors several times a day both on the job and at auditions. We've been working on *Dexter* for many months now, usually completing one or two episodes a week. It's interesting for me to do several shows a day. The style of every director is completely unique and it's a real challenge to understand and fulfill each approach as closely as possible. We finish up with *Dexter* around 5:45 p.m. which will end my Monday work day. I live about an hour outside of town on the Pacific Ocean which adds a considerable amount of time onto my day driving-wise but the peace and

beauty to be found there is well worth the drive. Books on tape are my constant companion while in the car!

What A Long (Tues) Day!

Tuesday begins at 8 a.m. with more *Rugrats*. We work our way through most of the script, plus there are a few changes and pickup lines from yesterday's session. A pickup line is when a line from a previous session has to be re-recorded due either to technical imperfections or re-writing. It's all the same crew again and everything goes smoothly. The people at Paramount have sent us gift baskets to commemorate the official start of the film.

No two days are even remotely alike.

After my morning session I do a quick run up the street to a recording studio called Waves where I do a fast couple of radio spots for Ziploc. I auditioned for these at my agent's office just the week before. I got to do the whole spot as Martha Stewart which was a blast. She has very precise mannerisms which makes her great fun to imitate. Of course, it can only be a spoof as opposed to dead-on mimicking...no law suits here!

Next is another cartoon: Disney's *Hercules*. This show has been recorded by a celebrity cast in all the lead roles. James Woods, Jennifer Aniston, Tate Donovan and tons of others. I'm there to play a pair of slave girls and a poodle. Hmm...sometimes the college education seems such a waste, know what I

mean? They record everyone separately on this show because of hugely divergent schedules and I arrive just as French Stewart is finishing his spot. This guy is amazing to watch. His ad libs are hilarious and he just utterly and absolutely becomes his character. He's very uninhibited and very imaginative.

My session is brief, brief, brief. A couple of "Yes, your Highness"s and a bark or two and I'm out of there. This session is being recorded at Screen Music in North Hollywood which is one of my favorite places on Earth, which is a good thing since I sometimes spend part of every single day there. As it turns out, my next session is also at Screen Music and also for Disney. It also contains barking! It's *101 Dalmatians*, the series, where I play Rolly, Cadpig and Anita. We end up recording well over a hundred episodes of this show throughout the year, often up to four episodes a week. Also, once the episodes come back from overseas where they are animated, we have dozens and dozens of sessions of looping to perfect the dialogue for broadcast. Often the animators will create "lip flaps" where there is no actual dialogue taking place or a line will be garbled or unclear sound-wise and

need to be re-recorded for clarity. Sometimes a scene just isn't funny in its finished form, so the writers will come up with a (hopefully) more clever series of lines. In these sessions we watch the scene on a television and drop the new line in over the old line. This kind of session is very challenging as you are trying to feel the scene properly but in a specific time frame. Also the new lines can be very tricky to fit into the established lip flaps (movements).

101 is wrapped by 6 p.m. and my day is once again done; except, of course, for the two scripts I find waiting on my doorstep when I arrive home. Often the scripts for the next day's work don't get delivered until the night before which means "homework" awaits. There is also a tape that has been delivered with a rough track of a song that needs to be learned for tomorrow's session.

Television Plus Some: Wednesday

The next morning is yet another *Rugrats* session but this one is scheduled for all day, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. We complete the last scenes, do pickups and, in the afternoon, record songs. From this point on, all ensuing work on the movie will be only the occasional pickup session. My next session is back at Screen Music in North Hollywood. It's *Casper* for Universal Cartoons. I

play the part of Kat, Casper's young human friend. We do two episodes where Ginny McSwain directs. Ginny is a legend in the animation world. We all adore her. She is hugely bright, utterly irreverent, fast, precise and direct. To be bossed around by her is a joy.

Often the scripts for the next day's work don't get delivered until the night before which means "homework" awaits.

We complete the two *Casper* episodes and then I have one more thing to do before the day is done: drive to the voice casters and audition for an Airtouch Cellular advertisement. This appointment is in Burbank and I have to get there by 6:15 p.m. With a lot of careening around and breaking of laws, I just make it. (I do end up booking this...several radio spots and a television spot which record the following week.)

One Busy Day: Thursday

Thursday starts with a 9 a.m. session at Screen Music. This time it is *Invasion America*. Steven Spielberg and Harvey Bennett are executive producing the show and it is a vastly interesting project. The vision of the show is an utterly real, very prime-time feeling science-fiction adventure. It is also a very celebrity-heavy show. We all work together at the same time which makes for some great scene work. Leonard Nimoy, Kristy McNichols, Robert Urich, the amazing Edward Albert...all great actors. My parts on this show are wonderful and offer me great opportunities to play around. The scenes are taut and highly emotional. We all have a good time hamming it up while at

the same time reining it in.

My day is very tightly booked today so while my contract would normally have me staying the entire four hours, my agent has arranged to have me released early so that I can get everything in. My next stop is in Burbank at Horta Sound for an episode of *Hey Arnold* in which I play Helga's mother, Miriam, and Harold's mother, Marilyn. This show makes me about as happy as I can get. I can't possibly describe to you how wonderful this set is; it is the most creative atmosphere of which I have ever been a part. The scripts are beyond compare. The talent is really original with the children's parts being played by child actors, who are refreshing and great. Furthermore, everyone on the production team is a pal. They pickup my lines separately so I can make my 1:30 session in West Hollywood.

The next session is an odd one. It's at a new studio that I've never been to before that is clearly set up to record music. The engineer seems to have been hired for only the day. This is a pilot for a new series which is funded by a Japanese gentleman who doesn't speak English and the session is run by folks who have no previous experience in animation. Chaos would about sum it up. I play all of the female parts and a couple of other voices as well. Five roles in all made it a lucrative session if not a, shall we say, easily experienced one. Somehow I got through it. I survived it and the subsequent ten sessions over the ensuing weeks, even though the 'chaos factor' never really lifted.

After this session is over, I have one more to do, so it is back to Screen Music for more *101 Dalmatians*. This runs from 4 to 6 p.m. and then it's in the car and home.



Kat, Casper's young human friend in Universal's series, *Casper*, is voiced by Kath Soucie. © MCA TV International.

Commercials Abound: Friday

The last day of the week was more of a commercial day than the previous ones. The day starts a little later than usual — 10 a.m. I am not an early riser by nature and *any* extra time to be had sleeping in the morning is hugely appreciated. My first call of the day is a quick stop to record a television spot for Mattel's Rapunzel Barbie. Apparently, Barbie now has really, really, really, long hair that she can just pull right out of her head so old Ken can climb up it and rescue her. Not to mention a castle with a turret and a cool medieval dress and shoes - that girl has everything! And I get to tell the world about it on national television. I couldn't be more proud...

Next is a radio spot at Bell Sound for Eckerd Drugs. Phil Proctor and I have been doing a campaign for Eckerd for about a year or so. We play your typical *Mad About You* bantering couple whose conversation seems to center around what great stuff they're going to buy at Eckerd that week and how much they're going to save doing it. Phil

and I thoroughly enjoy ourselves with a lot of improvisational work which we love. Phil also plays my husband Howard on *Rugrats*; yet another instance of how actors' days can often intersect.

When this session wraps, I drive to Margarita Mix and do a series of commercials for Greyhound. This is a national campaign that is a new account for me. I very much enjoy working with these people. They are a different breed from most other people in their part of the industry. They are very earnest and meticulous and every possible interpretation is tried on each spot. There are some instances where this approach can be tedious and mind-numbing but with this particular group, there is such a very good feeling about the project that it proves to be inspiring and a challenge.

The final session of the week is another Disney cartoon, *Recess*, directed by Paul Germain. Paul was one of the original creators of *Rugrats* and directed all of the early episodes so we are old friends and

partners in crime. This show is another that employs children playing children and the writing is superb as well. I am guessing on this show and I'm playing a sort of "dooms-day" little boy whose job is to warn all the other little kids on the playground about how awful it's all going to be. He has just seen his big brother kissing a girl for the first time and is appalled at the heinousness of the sight. He warns all of the boys that this is a terrible event that awaits them in their future. There's no escaping it. Then he describes the kiss in graphic detail, giving all the little boys terrible nightmares and hives. Paul and I have a great time with this and I get to play the thing to the hilt. We wrap at 5:30.

So, that's about the size of my week, guys. When I was a little girl, I only knew that I wanted to do something absolutely unique, be around fascinating and dashing people all day long, and never be bored. Mission accomplished.

Bonus HTML Features

Every online (HTML) issue of *Animation World Magazine* contains additional features not found in the download or print Acrobat version, such as Quicktime movies, links to Animation World Network sites, extended articles and special sections. Don't miss the following highlights that are showcased exclusively in this month's *Animation World Magazine* HTML version:

<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.12/2.12pages/2.12cover.html>

- **FernGully 2: The Magical Rescue - Getting the Money on the Screen**

This article by Dave Marshall and Phil Robinson includes a visual supplement with several storyboard panels from the film. <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.12/2.12pages/2.12marshallferngully>.

- **Cruddy Sketches and a Red Pen: Pre-Production on Lucas Arts' *The Curse of Monkey Island***

Russell Bekins' article contains a sample page from LucasArts' production book for *The Curse of Monkey Island*. <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.12/2.12pages/2.12bekinslucas.html>

- **T.R.A.N.S.I.T.: A Delicious Sense of Understanding and Journey**

Emru Townsend's review includes a Quicktime movie of *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* directed by Piet Kroon. <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.12/2.12pages/2.12townsendtransit.html>

- **The Oscars Report**

We take a closer look at this year's five Academy Award nominees for Best Animated Short Film with information, images and Quicktime movies about the selected nominees. We also invite you to vote for your Oscar pick in AWN's "unofficial Oscars survey."
<http://www.awn.com/oscars>

Kath Soucie is a Los Angeles-based voice actor. Her animation credits include voice work on Disney's Beauty and the Beast, 101 Dalmatians, Jungle Cubs, Quack Pack, Gargoyles, Pepper Ann and Recess; Nickelodeon's Rugrats and Hey Arnold; DreamWorks' Invasion America and Toonsylvania; Universal's Casper, Earthworm Jim and Savage Dragon; Hanna-Barbera's Dexter's Laboratory; HBO's Spawn; Warner Bros.' Space Jam, and Lucas Arts games Full Throttle, Outlaws and Mortimer.

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Mae Questel:

A Reminiscence, History and Perspective

by Andrew J. Lederer

In February 1995, animation historian Jerry Beck curated a Museum of Modern Art tribute to the cartoons of Paramounts Famous Studios. At a party related to the event, Jackson Beck, most famous as the voice of Bluto in many of the Paramount cartoons, was peppered with questions about the vocal history of the east coast animation studio. His response was something like, "There's only one person alive who was there from the beginning and *she* can't tell you anything." The person Beck was referring to was pioneer voice great Mae Questel (Betty Boop, Olive Oyl, etc.) and he was confirming recent rumors that she had descended into the depths of Alzheimers disease and could no longer issue accurate reports from animation's past.

An Enchanted Evening

Just four and a half years earlier, at Betty Boop designer Grim Natwicks hundredth birthday soiree, Questel had been in high spirits and had charmed the large crowd with both story and song. While in Los Angeles, she was in discussions with Paramount about a role in its upcoming production, *The Butcher's Wife*, and she was thrilled to have the opportunity to attend the gathering in Natwicks honor. The banquet hall was filled with animation veterans dating back to the medium's pre-World War I beginnings alongside contemporary talents from such projects as *The Simpsons*. Nonagenarian Walter Lantz took Natwicks hand and practically danced around the large

birthday cake at the front of the ballroom, while at a nearby table, Jerry Beck and I were attempting to extract from Ms. Questel the secrets of the Fleischer and Famous studios.

Questel was a sparkling dinner companion, but I remember the evening more for what she didn't tell us than for what she did. We were endeavoring to learn the extent of the credited directors' involvement in Famous Studios' recording sessions. We repeatedly asked her who had directed the voice actors during the Forties and Fifties. She kept asserting that Dave Fleischer had directed the sessions, even though Fleischer had left the operation during the first half of 1942. Regardless, she was so clear and direct during the remainder of the conversation that we chalked up her mistaken insistence to the

vagaries of normal aging. Questel, with her protective husband Jack glowering nearby, chatted happily with fans and signed autographs well into the night and we most assuredly did not recognize in her behavior any ominous indications of imminent decline.

Questel was a sparkling dinner companion, but I remember the evening more for what she didn't tell us than for what she did.

Sadly, Ms. Questel's recent death at the reported age of 89 will leave some questions forever unanswered. Grim Natwick has passed on, as have Walter Lantz and Shamus Culhane, and so many others from animation's early days. Whatever it is that only they knew and no one ever asked, is now permanently lost.

The people who lived the history of the medium we love, are both our best and worst sources of information about its past. They know things that no one else can, from a perspective that is theirs alone. But, like most people, they take a less than academic approach to the details of their own lives and thus, are often wrong when we desperately need them to be right. The following is a brief and loving bio of Ms. Questel. Much of it is culled from her own recollections. Some of it may be wrong and much of it is right but all of it was Mae.



Mae Questel. Photo courtesy of Leslie Cabarga.

Her Early History

Mae Questel was a natural

"ham," born into a family that didn't believe show business was a suitable profession for a respectable girl. The young New Yorker had obvious talent and performed frequently at charitable and community functions. However, professional opportunities were rejected by both her parents and grandparents.

In retrospect, it seems inevitable that Mae would eventually enjoy a professional theatrical career. While still a child, for instance, her talent brought her into the circle of famed violinist Mischa Ellman, who introduced her to many important people. Her career came about, however, not through the intercession of the powerful, but through a confluence of talent and pure happenstance at a time when she thought she had given up her theatrical aspirations for good.

Mae had embarked upon a career in teaching when some of her friends, knowing her to be a natural mimic, entered her in a Helen Kane impersonation contest at the RKO Fordham Theater where Miss Kane was appearing. Mae was concerned that such a public display would be inappropriate for a teacher, but she participated in the competition and was, of course, victorious. Alone among the competi-



Questel, with her experience in radio and vaudeville performance, was a perfect match for the voice of Betty Boop. © King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios

tors, Mae decided to watch Kane's act before the contest began, and as a result emulated the star with greater accuracy than any of the other contestants. Combined with her natural oomph, Mae's dead-on mimicry earned her a contract with the RKO vaudeville circuit which finally kicked off her professional career.

Mae quickly developed an act ("Mae

Questel - Personality Singer of Personality Songs") that included impersonations of such other celebrities as Eddie Cantor, Ruth Etting and Maurice Chevalier. She began appearing on radio programs and in short order was chosen by cartoon producer Max Fleischer to be the voice of his animated Helen Kane look/sound-alike, "Betty Boop."

Taking the role of Betty Boop made Mae Questel immortal ...

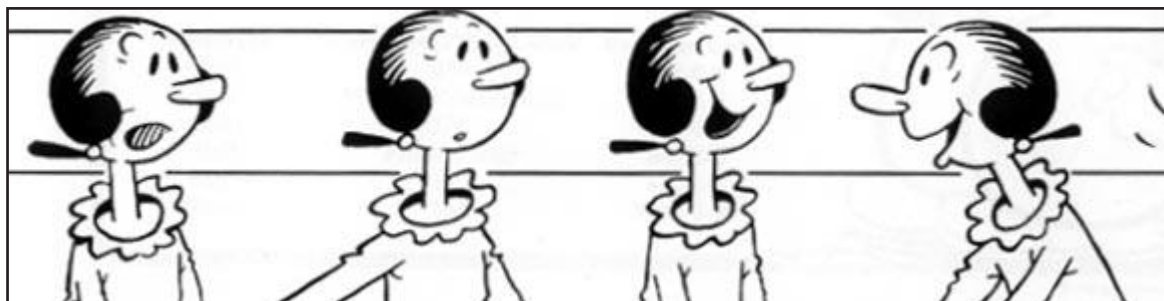
An Animated Career

Taking the role of Betty Boop made Mae Questel immortal (and perhaps vice-versa), but the Fleischers got something out of the bargain as well – the first in a stable of voice actors that would make

Paramount cartoons second to none in the field of vocal characterizations. With the addition of Jack Mercer (Popeye) in the mid-1930s, the Fleischer cartoons began featuring top-quality vocal tracks long before most other cartoons from either New York or Hollywood could even come close. Mae's ability to ad-lib helped the cartoons tremendously as did her magical way with a song. In due time, Mae added other Paramount characters, both male and female, to her repertoire, voicing Olive Oyl, Pudgy and a host of other creations.

In short, it was a marvelous career and, seemingly, a marvelous life.

When Fleischer Studios moved to Florida in the late 1930s, Mae, who had a young family in New York, decided to stay behind. As a result, she did only a little work for Paramount's cartoon unit during the early 1940s. However, when the studio returned to New York sans the Fleischers in 1943, Mae returned to her position as its primary female actor. Jackson Beck, Arnold Stang and Sid Raymond were added to the ensemble during the '40s and '50s and this tightly-knit vocal unit turned out some of the most satisfying voice tracks of animation's golden age. (Mercer, Questel and Beck also did a series of more than 200 Popeye cartoons made directly for television that were syndicated in the early 1960s.)



Questel styled the voice of Olive Oyl, the whiny girlfriend of Popeye, after Zasu Pitts. © King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios

Ancillary Antics

Mae had a related career in radio that included both afternoon and evening Betty Boop broadcasts, as well as appearances on such programs as *The Green Hornet* and

Perry Mason. Her early television work included a stint as a panelist on *Stop Me If You've Heard This One* and as the voice of the interactive cartoon sprite, Winky Dink. She did commercials for Bromo Seltzer, Nabisco Honey Grahams and Yuban Coffee and was the memorably helpful Aunt Bluebell in a series of Scott Towels spots during the 1970s.

She made records as Betty Boop, Olive Oyl and Little Audrey and even a novelty item called, *Mrs. Portnoy's Retort*. She also had a significant on-camera career in motion pictures.

Celluloid Capers

During the '30s, a live-action Mae portrayed a Boop-ish character in several Paramount short subjects and was also in a Paramount feature called *Wayward*. The studio offered her a Hollywood contract in 1932 but typically, she turned it down and remained in New York at the request of her first husband. As with most of her ambitions, film success did ultimately come to Mae. All she had to do was live her life and wait for it.

During the '60s and '70s, she appeared in *It's Only Money* with Jerry Lewis, *Move* with Elliott Gould and *Funny Girl* with Gould's ex-wife Barbra Streisand. She became familiar to audiences, who may not even have known she was Betty Boop, as a quintessential Jewish mother. In the late 1980s, she played her most important Jewish mother in Woody Allen's *Oedipus Wrecks* segment of the film *New York Stories*.

Quintessentially Mae

In short, it was a marvelous career and, seemingly, a marvelous life. Certainly it was a quintessentially New York career – stage, car-

toons, commercials, radio. Feature films weren't really a factor until they began to move east in more recent times.

Furthermore, Mae retained her authenticity as a character by remaining in the east. Her later on-camera roles felt very real. Mae's most natural voices were always maternal and Jewish. Her Olive Oyl, originally styled after Zasu Pitts, ultimately became very "Aunt Bluebell." Betty Boop was also very much a "Jewish mother." It was, I think, the genuineness of her exuberant portrayals that made Mae Questel a success.

It was, I think, the genuineness of her exuberant portrayals that made Mae Questel a success.

But if her humanity was her secret, it did not render her flawless. The story has oft been told about how Helen Kane sued Max Fleischer over the theft of her persona for his *Betty Boop* series. Many witnesses, including Mae, were trotted out by Fleischer to claim that Betty was not based on Kane.



The world said farewell to the voice of Betty Boop when Mae Questel passed away on January 4, 1998 at the age of 89. © King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios

However, Mae had to have known that Betty was based on Helen. Her entire career was built on her original impersonation of Helen Kane. On the night of that fateful contest, Kane had autographed a photo to Mae that said, "To Another Helen Kane." Mae took great pains later on to explain that Betty was drawn to look like her, but Mae wasn't even the first actress to voice Betty. Others, including Little Ann Little, had earlier played the role.

No one that I know of, in telling this tale, has ever called into question Mae's having taken part in this lawsuit, which Kane actually *lost*! In the final analysis, it's just one more incident in a life full of incidents both professional and personal. It demonstrates though that no story is fairy tale pure. Everyone is just a person. We often choose our heroes based not on what they've done, but because we *like* them. We *liked* Mae Questel. I have no doubt she deserved it.

The author would like to thank Leslie Cabarga for his contribution to and assistance with this article. His book, *The Fleischer Story* is available from DaCapo Press, or in autographed form directly from the author (contact lescab@earthlink.net).

Andrew J. Lederer has been a writer and editor for Wild Cartoon Kingdom, Sci-Fi Universe, Film Threat and The Elmo Aardvark Newsletter. He recently contributed to an essay on the history of Paramount cartoons that accompanies a just-released CD featuring music from the films.

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Animating in the Spotlight: Creating Prime Time

by Mike Wolf

Editor's note: Due to Twentieth Century Fox's legal restrictions about publishing art on the Internet, this article does not contain any images.

In terms of large-scale animation production, the industry has long been divided between features and "Saturday Morning." The last ten years, however, has seen the emergence of a new genre, "Prime Time." While there has always been the occasional prime time animated special (most often around the holidays), it wasn't until *The Simpsons* debuted in 1989 that anyone had tried to produce at the prime time level on a weekly schedule, at least not since Hanna-Barbera did *The Flintstones*, more than 30 years before.

No, prime time animation is a matter of style and content. Simply put, it's "smart" animation.

So what, you are asking, does he mean by "prime time level?" How is that different from any other television animation program? It is not a measure of the quality of the animation. We are still in the television medium with all the limits of a television schedule that preclude the kind of fluid, full animation that one would expect to see in a feature. No, prime time animation is a matter of style and content. Simply

put, it's "smart" animation.

In the eyes of the network brass, a prime time cartoon has to compete. It has to compete with *Seinfeld*, *Frazier* and *Home Improvement*. It has to appeal to adult demographics. It has to hold an audience throughout the season and not get stale and predictable. Prime time is the major leagues. It's not just kids stuff, anymore.

Script And Recording: Prime Time Writers, Prime Time Actors

Market shares? Demographics? Counter programming? Hey! Whatever happened to sight gags, delayed takes and over-the-top, cartoony animation?

The differences between prime time and Saturday morning animation start at the network level. A network risks a lot on an animated series. Initially, animation is much more expensive to produce than live-action sitcoms - at least until the show's a hit and the stars' salary demands start to escalate. Also, the network executives have to wait six months to see the first show, which means they have to commit themselves early and all the way. There is no pulling the plug after two or three episodes die on the air, because the others are already in the pipeline. These are very scary thoughts in their high-stakes business.

For this reason, the networks

bet on the writers. They know the writers and they're comfortable with writers. In TV sitcom-land the writer is king.

For this reason, the networks bet on the writers ... in TV sitcom-land the writer is king.

All too often in children's animation, the writer is a lonely, underpaid soul who bangs out a script in a couple of weeks and hands it over to the producer, never to lay eyes on it again. At the prime time level, the writer *is* the producer, the executive producer! Usually hired away from another hit series for a small fortune and handed the keys to the store. The writer rules so by extension, the script is golden. Nobody messes with the script. It is the product of a dozen or more equally high-paid and talented scribes who've put in many long weeks of crafting characters and fine-tuning jokes.

Voice talent is another area where the producers try to separate prime time from all the other fare on television. The community of voice actors who specialize in animation is small, and if you watch enough Saturday morning cartoons, their voices start to become familiar. So, there has been a conscious decision to look for acting talent with a different sound. With *The Simpsons* originating on *The Tracy Ullman Show*, the voice talent was drawn from the ensemble of regulars in the live-action skits, mostly

stand-up comics. If you look at the cast of *The Critic* or *King of the Hill*, you will find it is mostly made up of television or film actors or stand-up comics, but not professional voice actors. This choice of actors reflects the desire to move away from the over-the-top nature of cartoon acting and towards a more clever, insightful and witty, dialogue-driven show.

The Director: Really, a Director?

Lets move onto the animation production process.

We start with a director. No, not a sheet timer, a director, just like a feature director. He is charged with pulling together board artists, designers, layout artists, sheet timers ... all the creative choices funnel through him. Its his name on the screen and its his vision. The director answers only to the executive producer.

Its a big job. The director is only asked to direct one show at a time over a four-month schedule, but he has to look at every last drawing and in most cases, he goes over every one personally to make it just a little better. Therefore, he has to be an expert at every step. He has to be a board artist, a designer, a layout artist, a timer. But he is not alone, don't worry. The director is usually one of ten, sharing a staff of over a hundred, trying to put out a series of 24 to 26 shows a year. For the director, each episode is a prime time special. He is generally not juggling multiple episodes and is thus able to focus all his attention on just one story, one 22-minute film.

Storyboard: This is a Sitcom. Think *Seinfeld*, Not *Batman* or *Garfield*

The storyboard artist starts when he gets the script and the

assembled voice recording. As most half-hour sitcoms are written in a three-act format, the director usually divides the work between himself and two other board artists. This is not unlike how Saturday morning cartoons are boarded. What's different is the style of boarding.

"Where have all the artists gone? Gone to features everyone, long time ago."

Think of a one-camera live-action television show and you will start to have a sense of the thinking behind prime time boarding. There's less emphasis on ambitious, showy staging that you'll find in a feature, but it is also a far cry from the proscenium approach that is found in much of children's cartoons. Making the camera work for you is also a key factor, not only in terms of placement, but movement. There is a lot more camera action in prime time whether its a subtle camera adjust or a big match-cut pull out. Keeping the camera in motion and quick cutting keeps the pace up. Prime time scripts are densely packed with "A," "B" and sometimes even "C" story lines, multiple character arcs and side jokes in every scene. Packing this all into 22 minutes and not losing the audience is an art.

Design: Hands-On Producers and Creators

Another key difference between Saturday morning animation and prime time reveals itself in the design area. Network executives hold all of the approval rights for a show's design in Saturday morning but they rarely get involved with the design once the initial style has been set and production is underway. In prime time, the executive producers (writers) hold sway on

the design of the show and remain integrally involved throughout production. Every character, prop and background is approved or changed to their specifications. While some may bemoan the loss of creative control, it remains the price of admission to working in prime time.

Layout: The Lost Art of TV Animation?

"Where have all the artists gone? Gone to features everyone, long time ago."

Excuse this terrible paraphrasing of an old folk song, but it points out a trend in the industry that presents a problem to anyone trying to produce quality television animation. When Hanna-Barbera first started shipping animation overseas, they created a paradigm shift in the industry. Soon there would no longer be jobs for animators, assistant animators, inbetweeners, painters or layout artists in television animation. There was a period of widespread unemployment as everyone scrambled either to land a job on a feature or learn a new skill such as storyboarding, design or timing.

Layout has become an entry-level position in the animation industry.

As a result, ten years later when Klasky Csupo tried to put together a layout team for *The Simpsons*, they were forced to cobble together a crew consisting mostly of students or other artists new to the industry and train them. Since then, this has become standard practice. Layout has become an entry-level position in the animation industry. *The Simpsons*, now in its tenth season and *King of the Hill*, in its third season, are almost entire-

ly staffed with artists with no other industry experience. They've learned their craft working on the show. These shows have now become feeders to the feature houses at Warner Bros., Disney and DreamWorks.

Layout is taught and practiced a little differently on today's prime time shows than it used to be in the old days at Hanna-Barbera or Filmation, or is currently done for features. Typically, after a rough is produced, the finished background layout is drawn by one artist while another sketches out the key animation poses. In order to produce an "animatic," layouts are usually posed out with every animation extreme required by the scene, not just a first and last position. All the scene mechanics are also worked out as would normally be done by a scene planner.

Animatic: The Walk-Thru

One innovation that was utilized for the production of *The Simpsons* was the animatic.

On a feature, they build a leica reel so the director can get a sense of the flow of the film while it is still being animated. Problems can then be easily headed off early in the production in case anything isn't working. This isn't being done in television because the animation is all done out of the country. However it wasn't done in the early days of television either when the animation was all done in-house.

Jim Brooks, one of the creators of the show, was also a highly successful television producer. He was used to having a "walk-thru" by the actors a day before taping the show in order to give the writers an opportunity to see and hear their work play out. Jim felt this was an essential tool for a writer-driven show, but how to accomplish this in

animation? The answer turned into what we call the "animatic," which is a film of the key pose animation and layouts synched to the dialogue track. This animatic is then screened for the writers and producers who in turn give notes on staging, acting and timing as well as rewrite the bits that need punching up. Sometimes as much as 50% of a script can be rewritten. It's an expensive process, but one that pays off not only for the writer, but for the director as well.

Because the substance of prime time is about dialogue and acting rather than movement, the demands of timing are a little different.

While the use of an animatic may have originated on *The Simpsons* it has quickly been taken up by other productions, and not only in prime time. Producers, who have the luxury of affording it, see the opportunity of bringing back some of the control that was lost by shipping the animation out to off-shore subcontractors.

Timing: Sell The Joke. Stand-Up Comedy, Not Kung-Fu Fighting

Because the substance of prime time is about dialogue and acting rather than movement, the demands of timing are a little different. Recognizing early on that they were not going to get brilliant animation from the overseas production houses, directors started writing exposure sheets that called for very specific and precise (to the frame) moves with very clear instructions to the animator not to do any more than for what was called. "Ad lib" was banned from the vocabulary. Instead, a series of coded abbreviations were devised to call out a variety of pre-set animation

pieces. The rest was provided either by the many layout poses or additional poses written on the sheets themselves. Breakdowns and inbetweens were indicated by tick marks so that the Korean animator was left with little or no room for interpretation.

In fairness to the Korean artists, a lot of what they were used to was not relevant to prime time. Cartoon takes and broad acting wasn't wanted. Instead, the writers were asking for a subtlety of acting to deliver their punch lines, jokes that were often hinged on cultural reference points that only the American television audience was going to appreciate.

Prime Time Results

So, what makes prime time animation special? It's certainly not feature in either the quality or complexity of the animation, nor does it try to be. But, it is in a class by itself as far as television animation and this is due to the time, care and, most of all, thought that goes into this deceptively simple style. Like I said, it is *smart* animation.

You can't argue with success. The animation that has succeeded in prime time has all been produced in a similar fashion. These shows have competed with the best of television and won out. That satisfaction is the reward for those who work so hard to do their very best.

Mike Wolf, a 20-year veteran of the animation industry, is currently producing the animation for both The Simpsons and King of the Hill for Fox at Film Roman.

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The World Animation Celebration: Pasadena's Festival

by Heather Kenyon

The World Animation Celebration (WAC) crept into Pasadena rather slowly for a week of activities from February 16-21, 1998 with a large number of events. The New Animation Technology Exposition and Conference was a well-organized success and so were the panel discussions included in the International Business Conference of Television Animation (IBCTA) and the World Summit for Feature Films and Visual Effects. While this festival doesn't have a market or provide the type of business opportunities like MIFA at Annecy or NATPE, it does offer executives a chance to schmooze with one another and hear their peers discuss ideas and points of view. WAC also did a good job at providing learning opportunities and classes to students and folks wanting to break into the biz through the classes offered at the New Animation Technology Exposition and Conference and the booths at the ASIFA-Hollywood Opportunities Expo. A frustration with the Celebration, however, was the feeling that the different events were spread out and disconnected. There wasn't a list of attendees and contact information, mailboxes or a central location to meet people, like a festival bar or restaurant.

The meat and the potatoes of most festivals are the filmmakers and their films. This is not the case at WAC. The competition screenings at WAC are not the centerpiece of

the festival. For example, filmmakers are not asked to stand after their film is screened, which is a customary courtesy at most festivals. While those filmmakers from California are probably not that disgruntled, one has to think about how the filmmakers attending from farther afield like New York and Europe feel. Also, the selection of films were not strong and the programming of some special screenings, like *The World's Funniest Cartoons*, was very uneven. Once, again the filmmakers suffered. Those that had their films screened in programs that didn't match their film's style and tone were unfairly criticized by audience members who were justifiably expecting different content. For better or worse, depending on whom one asks, WAC focuses on studio showcases. While some of these were quite exciting and informative overviews, others did not present certain promised treats. For instance, many attended the DreamWorks/PDI Studio Salute strictly to catch a moving glimpse of *Prince of Egypt*. This was the hot ticket (and with a \$10 price tag!), but not only was a clip not shown, DreamWorks did not make a complete presentation. Costs run high at this festival so participants should



The MTV/Nickelodeon development panel was one of the more informative corporate-sponsor programs at the World Animation Celebration. Front row, left to right: Rebecca Poole (Nickelodeon), Melinda Toporoff (Nickelodeon), Machi Tantillo (MTV) and back row, left to right: Kat Fair (Nickelodeon), moderator Sarah Baisley (Animation Magazine) and Eric Calderon (MTV).

try to do as much homework as possible to ensure that they are going to get the biggest bang for their buck. It is hard in the midst of pre-festival chaos to do research but in the long run a little homework would save time and disappointment.

Please read the following reviews to learn more about this year's World Animation Celebration:

In "The New Animation Technology Exposition and Conference Viewed and Reviewed," Ben Fried reveals that this event was well worth his while.

"Tuning in to the IBCTA" by Sherry Niedelman reviews this executive pow-wow, the International Business Conference for Television Animation.

Mark Farquhar found the World Summit for Feature Films and Visual

Effects to be quite inspiring. Find out why...

In "Thinking About the World Animation Celebration '98," Michelle Klein-Häss reviews the screenings and retrospectives, including the WAC Lifetime Achievement award winners.

The Winners Are Announced

The winners of the World Animation Celebration are as follows. All prizes are credited as they are on the official list of winners, however, only first place is listed.

- Grand Prize: *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* by Piet Kroon.
- UNICEF Prize: *When Life Departs* by Karsten Kiellerich.
- Special Student Jury Prize: *Over the Hill* by Amanda Enright.
- Special Jury Prize: *Everybody's Pregnant* by Debra Solomon.
- Best Theatrical Feature Film: *I Married a Strange Person* by Bill Plympton.
- Best Use of Animation as a Special Effect in a Theatrical Feature Film: *Contact* by Sony Pictures Imageworks.
- Best Use of Animation in a Motion Picture Trailer: *Space Jam* by Warner Bros. Feature Animation.
- Best TV Commercial: *Dagwood Clay* by Luis Cook, Aardman Animations.
- Best TV Commercial Campaign: "Animate Your World" by Curious Pictures.

- Best Music Video: *Beyond* by Nathan Vogel, Sherri Sheridan, Minds Eye Media.
- Best Public Service Announcement: *The Right to Express Yourself* by Amy Friedman, Nickelodeon.
- Best Showreel: Pascal Blais Productions.
- Best Title Sequence: *One Saturday Morning* by POP Animation.
- Best Animation Produced for a TV Special: *Flatworld* by Daniel Greaves.
- Best Animation Produced for a Daytime TV Series: *Angry Beavers: Born to be Beavers* by Mitch Schauer, Mary Harrington, Nickelodeon.
- Best Animation Produced for Primetime: *The Simpsons*, "22 Films About Springfield" by Bill Dailey, Josh Weinstein.
- Best Direct-to-Video Production:

Beauty and the Beast: Enchanted Christmas by Walt Disney Television Animation.

- Best Animation Produced for CD-Rom/Games: *Titanic-Adventure Out of Time* by Bill Appleton, Andrew Nelson.
- Best Animation Produced for the Internet: *Protozoa's VRML Skits* by Dan Hanna, Emre Yilmaz, Steve Rein.
- Best 2-D Computer Generated Animation by a Professional: *The Conference of the Birds* by Zoltan Lehotay, C4/S4C/Varga Studios.
- Best 2-D Computer Generated Animation by an Independent: *Plug* by Meher Gourjian, Jamie Waese.
- Best 3-D CGI Effects by a Professional: *Geri's Game* by Jan Pinkava.
- Best 3-D CGI Effects by an Independent: *Bunkie and BooBoo* by Terrence Masson.



At the World Animation Celebration, the closing night awards ceremony was the one opportunity for filmmakers to be recognized on stage. Photo courtesy of Michelle Klein-Häss.

- Best 3-D CGI Character/Creature Animation by a Professional: *Anaconda* by John Nelson, Sony Pictures Imageworks.
- Best 3-D CGI Character/Creature Animation by an Independent: *The Physics of Cartoons* by Steph Greenberg.
- Best Use of Computer Animation in a Traditional Film by a Professional: *Mousehunt* by Rhythm & Hues.
- Best Stop-Motion Produced Professionally: "Animate Your World: Bob" by Meredith Fierman & Bee Murphy, Cartoon Network.
- Best Animation Produced for Educational Purposes: *When Life Departs* by Karsten Kiillerich.
- Best Animation Under 5 Minutes: *The Ambiguously Gay Duo*, "Safety Tips" by J.J. Sedelmaier Productions.
- Best Animation Between 5 and 15 Minutes: *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* by Piet Kroon, Iain Harvey.
- Best Animation Between 15 and 30 Minutes: *Survivors* by Sheila Sofian.
- Best Performance Animation: *We Should Go* by Emre and Lev Yilmaz, Protozoa.
- The Jim Henson Award: Best Stop-Motion by an Independent: *Clops* by Corky Quakenbush.
- Best Work by a Student: *Unborn Baby Blues* by Mark Levine.
- Best First Work by an Independent: *Spring* by Silke Parzich.
- Best Animation for Children: *The Adventures of Sam Digital in the 21st Century* by Adam Shaheen, Dorothy Engelman, Steve Angel, Cuppa Coffee Animation.
- Best Experimental Animation: *The Dowager's Feast* by Joan Gratz.
- Best Animation for Theme Park Ride Simulation: *Race for Atlantis* by Rhythm & Hues.
- Best Director of Animation for a TV Commercial: George Evelyn, (Colossal) Pictures for Coca-Cola *Factory*.
- Best Director of Animation for a Daytime TV Series: Robert Hughes for *Angry Beavers*, "Born to be Beavers," Nickelodeon.
- Best Director of Animation for a Primetime Series: Mike Anderson for *The Simpsons*, "Homer's Phobia."
- Best Director of Animation for a CD-Rom Game: Lorne Lanning for *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysey*.
- Best Director of Animation for a Home Video: Andy Knight of Walt Disney Television Animation, for *Beauty and the Beast: The Enchanted Christmas*.

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Thinking About the World Animation Celebration '98

by Michelle Klein-Häss

Well, here I am after a week of WAC and I'm pretty much none the worse for the wear. Then again, I spent a full day at the Internet Pow-Wow on Monday, took Tuesday completely off, went to only a few events on Wednesday and Thursday then attended solid screenings between 1 to 9:30 p.m. on Saturday. Some of my friends who attended the festival did a lot more and they had the blood-shot eyes and stooped, pooped bodies to prove it.

One observation comes to mind immediately...if WAC '97 was a well-oiled machine, WAC '98 was sort of like a car that needs a tune-up. Perhaps it was the fact that the second one happened less than a full year after the first, perhaps it was too few people riding herd on too many events, perhaps it was the Sophomore Curse.

If WAC '97 was a well-oiled machine, WAC '98 was sort of like a car that needs a tune-up.

Monday, February 16, 1998

The Internet Pow-Wow was a splendid event, although I suppose I would have to reply "guilty as charged" if someone accused me of bias. After all, it was the day the New and Improved Animation Nerd's Paradise was officially launched, and it was also a day full of wonderful information I intend to put into practice on ANP and other web sites of which I am in charge. The highlight was a panel which paired Internet pros with animation artists like Christine Panushka and Corky Quakenbush. After an

entire day hearing tech speak, it was very handy to get some perspective from those who perhaps aren't as technically inclined as myself and the majority of the presenters.

Wednesday, February 18, 1998

The screenings and events I attended ranged from the great to the so-so. Wednesday brought a tribute to *Speed Racer* (*Mach Go Go Go!*) which featured an episode of the classic 1960s animated series; the *Dexter's Laboratory* homage "Mach 5;" a peek at the absolutely hideous 1980s-vintage *Speed Racer* series made by Fred Wolf, and about half of a newly dubbed episode of the upcoming *Speed Racer 2001* series. I have a soft spot for *Speed Racer*, although it took a recent marathon on The Cartoon Network to remind me exactly why I liked the show in the first place. Speaking of The Cartoon Network, vice president of original programming (and confirmed Animation Nerd) Linda Simensky hosted this event.

Also on Wednesday, Bill Plympton's *I Married A Strange Person* unspooled. Early mentions of the show claimed this was the Plympton features "West Coast premiere," but the feature had already screened at Sundance weeks earlier...technically Utah is part of the West. *I Married A Strange Person* has its moments of hilarity, but unfortunately it simply goes on for far too long and repeats itself a lot. You get the idea that *Strange Person* would have made a great short or featurette, but as a feature it suffers.

Thursday, February 19, 1998

Thursday I took a peek at the

films in competition screenings, but was driven out by the quality, or rather lack thereof, I observed. What clinched my disgust was *Shikato*, a seemingly interminable (It was almost 8 minutes in reality.) series of blackout skits featuring some primitive, sub-Atari animation of mooses who bump into each other in slightly different ways. Perhaps the folks who enjoy those home video shows of people falling down in slightly different ways would find it funny...I just found it tedious.

Thursday concluded for me with two screenings: the 1981 semi-classic adult animated feature *Heavy Metal* that was introduced by its supervising director Gerald Potterton, and a tribute to the wizard of dimensional animation, Ray Harryhausen. The former is something I have seen a few times in the past. The sophomoric humor doesn't really stand up well, but the final



Ray Harryhausen, who brought puppets from the production of his stop-motion visual effects, was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award by modern-day counterpart, Ken Ralston. © Craig Skinner/Celebrity Photo, courtesy of WAC.

sequence, *Ta'arna*, still is as fresh as when *Heavy Metal* premiered so many years ago. One complaint about the *Heavy Metal* showing: the sound system in the Pasadena Civic Auditorium is not up to the task of playing high-quality multi-channel stereo sound. One hopes that THX or some other professional theater sound company would step up to the plate next year and donate a decent stereo system for use during the festival in the Civic and also in the Gold Theater upstairs.

The Harryhausen tribute was wonderful. The master showed clips from his work, ranging from his *Mother Goose* shorts from just after World War II all the way to *Clash Of The Titans*. With most of the Golden Age animation directors no longer among the living and many of the remaining ones in very poor shape, it was thrilling to see and hear that Mr. Harryhausen was still very much alive, well and mentally sharp. Thanks to the use of projection video, everyone in the house got a chance to see Harryhausen's amazingly detailed sketches and original models from his movies. One hopes that a publisher would approach Mr. Harryhausen with an offer to do an "art of Ray Harryhausen" book in the near future. Harryhausen was presented with a WAC Lifetime Achievement award for his vast cat-

The screenings and events I attended ranged from the great to the so-so.

alog of work.

One thing that rankled, however, was the characterization in some of the festival materials of dimensional animation as an "archaic" form of animation. Yes, 3-D computer animation is thriving and the means of making 3-D computer animation are becoming more and more accessible, but dimensional

animation, whether using clay or latex models or even existing, unmodified toys and dolls, is still a vital and thriving art form.

Friday, February 20, 1998

Friday I attended two more events: a screening of the first episode in the Japanese original animation video (OAV) series *The Peacock King* and a salute to Hanna-Barbera Studios and its founders Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera. The Hanna-Barbera event audience was full of H-B alumni and was a symphony of nostalgia. The clips shown were almost exclusively from the "classic" H-B series of the late '50s through 1966. The MGM years were represented by the Tom & Jerry short, *The Cat Concerto*. The event ended with the presentation of a WAC Lifetime Achievement Award to Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera.

Next came *The Peacock King*...a mess, but a beautiful mess. We were shown the first episode of this anime OAV effort: a tale which mixes Japanese and Tibetan Buddhist mysticism, evil neo-Nazis from Germany on the loose, and the time-honored story of the young hero and his elderly mentor into a chaotic stew. I'd probably want to seek out other works by the creators of *The Peacock King*, but as far as the rest of the episodes of this OAV series, I don't think I'd be too interested.

Saturday, February 21, 1998

Saturday, the last day of WAC, was a real busy one for me. I got to the festival about ten minutes after the first screening I want-



Animation legends Joe Barbera, left and William Hanna, right gathered with several of their former colleagues, including Margaret Loesch, Jean MacCurdy, Lucille Bliss and Iwao Takamoto. © Craig Skinner/Celebrity Photo, courtesy of WAC.

ed to see, the Corky Quakenbush/Space Bass presentation, got under way. Luckily, I didn't miss much beyond that annoying WAC intro bumper and a few introductory words. Those who think Quakenbush's career started with *MAD TV* got an eyeful of his earlier work, plus a good chunk of his *MAD TV*-related shorts. Interspersed with the screenings were giveaways of Space Bass-related goodies. Quakenbush is a real talent, and will probably make an impact on the animation industry to rival fellow animation iconoclasts like Danny Antonucci, John Kricfalusi and Ralph Bakshi.

It was thrilling to see and hear that Mr. Harryhausen was still very much alive, well and mentally sharp.

As soon as the Space Bass show ended, the big Cartoon Network event in the main Civic Auditorium venue beckoned. Plans for a quick jaunt around the ASIFA Animation Opportunities Expo were dashed as I had to choose between the one screening I really, really was looking forward to all through the week and the Expo. By the time the Cartoon Network show would be over, the Expo would be closed. However, I learned from friends

who were attending that Expo '98 was significantly smaller than the previous year's event, and that most of the studios were not being very aggressive in their hiring.

The Cartoon Network event was the worthy decision. This show was also hosted by Cartoon Networks Linda Simensky, and featured a lot of material from the vaults of the first cable network devoted entirely to cartoons. It included a hilarious *Dexter's Laboratory* short, "Rude Remover" which like the legendary *Ren & Stimpy* episode "Man's Best Friend," will never be shown on television. Also in the "forbidden" category were a couple of WWII-vintage classic shorts, Tex Avery's *Blitz Wolf* which was his first cartoon for MGM, and Friz Freleng's 1943 Looney Tune *Daffy The Commando*. It was good to see these cartoons on the big screen, and only *Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarves* would have been a better choice among the "banned 12" Warner Bros. cartoons.

However, the event did not totally revolve around forbidden delights. We got to see the premiere of another *Dexter's Laboratory* cartoon, "Dee-Dee and The Man," a bunch of Cartoon Network bumpers which as you know are often funnier than the programming, and the unveiling of a work in progress, a pencil test of one of Spümcø's new Ranger Smith shorts. The latter was great; a classic John K. moment, full of over-the-top energy and theatrics. This and another Ranger Smith short will be seen sometime this year on the Cartoon Network. Hang on to your Ranger hat!

After the Cartoon Network event, I got a little time to catch my breath and grab a quick bite before the John Coates event started. The Coates salute was nice, although the promised "clips from *Yellow Submarine* never seen in America"

were not shown. All *Submarine* clips were as I remembered them from several viewings. Also *The Beatles* animated series was barely touched upon and nothing from that series was shown. Most of the clips were from Coates' output as a producer and were his latter works like *The Snowman* and *When The Wind Blows* to his most recent short, the Elvis-as-cat opus *Famous Fred*. Coates was awarded the third of the three "Lifetime Achievement Awards" given at the festival.

After the Coates salute, we were ushered out only to have to get back into line for the penultimate event of the evening: the World Animation Competition awards. The big winner of the night was Piet Kroon and his short *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* This gorgeous evocation of the Art Deco and Streamline Modern art styles of the 1920s and 1930s tells a tale of skullduggery and sex amongst the Beautiful People of Europe. It won both the "Best Animated Work Longer Than 5 Minutes But Shorter Than 15 Minutes" category and the Grand Prize of the show. Bill Plympton's *I Married A Strange Person* won the coveted "Best Animated Feature" award, beating out the somewhat more deserving (and Annie-awarded) *Cats Don't Dance*. Corky Quakenbush's *Clops* short for *MAD TV* won for best dimensional animation, and got some of the loudest applause and cheers from the audience. Pixar got an award for *Geri's Game* in advance of its probable win at the Oscars, and Steph Greenberg received the award for "Best 3D CGI Character/Creative Animation by Independent" with his 'Net-influenced short, *The Physics of Cartoons*.

But the disappointments continued...Why did *The Simpsons*, a show long past its prime and hanging on strictly due to goodwill and the *King Of The Hills* audience, prevail not only over *King* but also

Beavis and Butt-Head, *South Park*, and *Daria*? Why did the plug-ugly *Beauty And The Beast: The Enchanted Christmas* win anything? The mind boggles.

Pixar got an award for *Geri's Game* in advance of its probable win at the Oscars...

At Week's End...

Summing up? WAC has a lot of work to do in tightening its focus and getting a better grip on the technical and organizational problems it faced this year. Perhaps WAC should be a biennial, along the lines of Ottawa and programmed for the years that Ottawa doesn't happen. WAC should also consider pushing the next Celebration to a Summer date. Apparently, a lot of the art student population could not get this non-vacation time off. A Summer date would also give WAC the advantage of having its pick of the best student works from schools like Cal Arts, UCLA School of Animation and Art Center College of Design. If NATE isn't going to come back to WAC next year, why not call on the organizers of AniFX and have them exhibit?

I wish I could call WAC a success. I cannot say it was a failure because a lot of fun events happened and I took home some great memories. But it could be a hell of a lot better. Mr. Thoren and Ms. Sullivan, the ball is in your court.

Michelle Klein-Häss is a San Fernando Valley-based writer, Associate Editor of Toon Magazine and Editor/Webkeeper of Animation Nerds Paradise.

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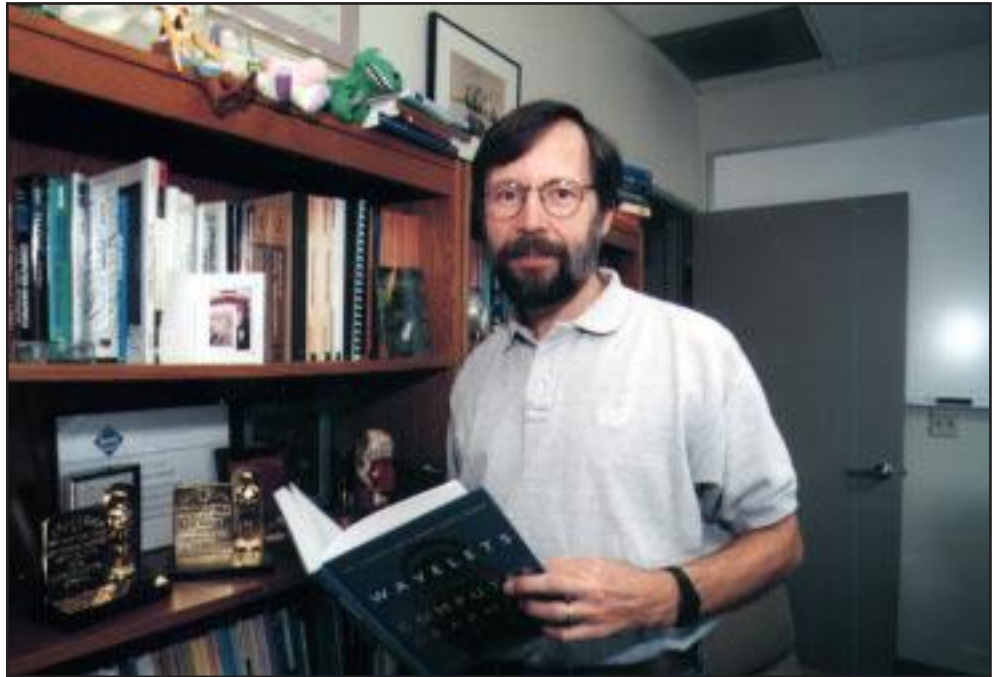
The New Animation Technology Exposition and Conference Viewed and Reviewed

by Ben Fried

Once again the World Animation Celebration has come and gone, transforming the Pasadena Civic center into an extremely happy (but not "The Happiest") place on Earth. For many Los Angeles-based industry professionals the Celebration is like an animator's New Years, a time to reflect and take stock of progress and change, as well as set resolutions and goals for the next Celebration. One indispensable element of the Celebration is the New Animation Technology Conference and Exposition, a selection of workshops, seminars and presentations designed to help the industry professional keep abreast of this rapidly evolving field.

I generally preferred product presentations on the exposition floor to their counterpart conference class...

Like many traditional animation artists, I have felt the pinch of encroaching technology, and have been simultaneously intimidated and awe-inspired by the expanding visual parameters in this new era of digital animation. I found both the exposition and the conference seminars to be helpful in demystifying new advances in digital animation, as well as informative on a variety of business topics. However, each had their own strengths in presenting



Pixar technology chief and executive vice president Ed Catmull gave an early morning keynote address at the New Animation Technology Expo. Photo courtesy of Pixar.

this information.

The exposition I enjoyed mostly for the personalized one-on-one demonstrations provided, as well as the freedom to hop from presentation to presentation in relative anonymity. I could ask the questions I wanted without risking the group contempt of a classroom of more advanced users, as well as grill demonstrators on specific items of interest without delaying any particular schedule of topics. For these reasons I generally preferred product presentations on the Exposition floor to their counterpart Conference class as many companies did both.

Conversely, I benefited from the conference class presentations

because they gave a broader overview of a topic. Jill Smolin, event organizer and also the training and artistic development manager at Cinesite, explained, "The whole focus [of the courses] was to establish the foundations." She wanted to "get away from the 'learn a package in an hour and get a job'" mentality of many events. "The fundamentals are imperative," she said.

During the conference classes, I also learned from the mostly intelligent questions posed by a relatively well informed audience. However, what I really enjoyed about the classes were the more conceptual business topics covered, where nothing was being sold or



More than 60 companies exhibited at the New Animation Technology Expo, which will move to Silicon Valley in 1999. Photo courtesy of Michelle Klein-Häss.

promoted, merely taught. Many of these business classes covered a scope much broader than the digital animation realm and both enlightened and inspired. Finally,

the quality of the conference classes depended heavily upon the chosen speakers. I preferred the professors and similarly experienced speakers over the programmers and

computer techies whose presentations were real snoozers. I particularly enjoyed the speakers who used quirky, whimsical anecdotes to underscore their point or whose bubbling enthusiasm and excitement for their topic became contagious.

The only drawback ... was the excess of different events simultaneously competing with each other.

The only drawback to the New Animation Technology Conference and Exposition was the excess of different events simultaneously competing with each other. If a presentation didn't capture a person's interest or teach them anything within the first ten minutes they left because they were probably missing something else more enlightening. On the last three days there were six Conference classes simultaneously competing for each hour and a half time slot, not too mention the Exposition floor. If you go next year choose wisely, plan ahead, and if at all possible wake up early; coffee is still a legal stimulant in this country, so use it.

Ben Fried is a Los Angeles-based freelance graphic designer and animator who works for many of the major television animation studios. He also creates independent animated films and has supervised ASIFA-Hollywood's life drawing workshops for over two years.

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World Summit for Feature Films and Visual Effects

by Mark Farquhar

Over the course of two days and six panel discussions, some of the most influential people in live-action effects and animation shared their views on where they think the animation industry is today and what its direction will take in the future. These panels marked the first meeting of the World Summit for Feature Films and Visual Effects. The summit is a new annual event being offered as part of the World Animation Celebration. Its purpose is to provide a forum for animation professionals to reflect on and consider the effects of technology and market changes on the animation industry.

The conference was able to attract an extraordinary group of people as panel members. The panels included the heads of several studios, independent producers and directors, and an impressive list of effects supervisors. Every major animation studio and production company was represented on the panels.

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It was fitting that they chose one of the pioneering entrepreneurs of computer animation, Robert Abel, to be the first keynote speaker for the summit. Having someone like Robert Abel, who has played such a key role in the early development of the computer animation industry, give the address was one of the conference's high points. The value of the conference was getting a sense about what some of these influential peo-

ple are thinking. If you have been to a good L.A. SIGGRAPH panel you have a pretty good idea what the summit was like. The scope of the discussions were fairly general and the usual kinds of concerns were expressed, such as the rising costs of production, particularly the increase in artist salaries over the past few years, and the consequences of the increased saturation of the marketplace of animation and effects-laden movies and entertainment. Other questions posed were, 'Can the audience base for animated features be expanded into a wider range of genres?' and 'What effect will computer technology have on our industry?'

The quality of an artist will be judged less on their technical ability as the tools become easier to use and more powerful.

Some of the more interesting ideas during the conference concerned the role of people and productions in the coming years. The idea that with more competition and greater availability of computing technology that the best projects and the most talented artists will continue to thrive. It is not the tool that is important. It is the artist

using the tool that contributes to the quality of the work. With increasingly cheaper and more accessible equipment, competition among artists is going to increase. The quality of an artist will be



Robert Abel's keynote speech was one of the highlights of the World Summit for Feature Films and Visual Effects. Photo by and © Craig Skinner/Celebrity Photo, courtesy of WAC.



Panelists at the Summit included, front row, left to right: Ron Thornton, Eric Armstrong, Terrence Masson, Sylvia Wong, Kelly Asbury, and back row: Mark Gustafson, Kevin Kutchaver, Kevin O'Neill and Henry Selick. Photo by and © Craig Skinner/Celebrity Photo, courtesy of WAC.

judged less on their technical ability as the tools become easier to use and more powerful. There was also the feeling that audiences would support the quality projects even if there is an over-saturation of product. Everyone agreed, projects with a good story will always do well.

This conference was a great opportunity to gain some insight into what is going on in the animation community. There was definitely a positive buzz around the Animation Summit. The first World Summit for Feature Films and Visual Effects had plenty of moments to inspire.

Mark Farquhar is a CG character animator currently working on the Iron Giant project at Warner Bros. Feature Animation. His credits include Batman Forever, Marvin the Martian, Mars Attacks, Jonny Quest, and commercial work. He is also an instructor in the Warner Bros. training program and continuing education courses at Glendale Community College.

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Tuning in to the IBCTA

by Sherry Niedelman

As I, a hopeful creator/future filmmaker for non-violent media, planned my trip to the second year of the World Animation Celebration, there were a variety of topics at this year's International Business Conference of Television Animation (IBCTA) that caught my eye. Abuzz with energy, a standing room only crowd of people from as far as Puerto Rico, Portugal, Canada, Italy and Brazil, hushed as the IBCTA kicked off its two-day event with a screening of prime time animation. The first panel then tackled the question, "Why is Animation Suddenly Working in Prime Time?"

Prime Time Animation

Leading the panel screenings was MTV's *Celebrity Deathmatch*, a clay-animated show with a rather violent theme, targeting 18-24 year-olds. Comedy

Centrals taste in wit and humor was revealed when they showed Alison Snowden and David Fines hysterical and eccentric short, *Bob's Birthday*. When *Bob & Margaret*, its spinoff series, hits the air it will give competitors a wake-up call. Klasky-Csupo's new *The Wild Thornberrys* looks like it will cross over from kids to mainstream, and hopefully the story lines will emerge to be as exciting as the detailed visuals.

Prime time content is geared for those of us who grew up mesmerized by Saturday morning cartoons, opening entirely new markets and distribution channels for the up-and-coming creator to pursue. The emphasis is on comedy and drama that is visually advanced, striking and often crude and shocking; which offers plenty of room for the unbounded artist to create an impact. David Simon, the co-head of DreamWorks Television

Animation, stated that grown-ups want more of a challenge to inspire and stimulate their minds versus Saturday mornings simple physical gags. This is where the telling of a good story appeals to a wider, more mature viewer. Another interesting point that was brought up is that 'prime time' is becoming different places on the clock depending on the channel. For instance, HBO

places animated programs on a late night track in a non-traditional prime time slot, whereas Fox has animated shows starting at 8:00 p.m.

There was some disagreement among panelists on the future of prime time in regards to the extreme political correctness of our times. Some felt that a tricky button is being pushed as everyone busts out of social norms. However, I agree with David Pritchard, president & CEO of Film Roman, who, in reference to MTV's *Deathmatch*., asked, "Why tune in to someone getting killed each week?"

Pushing the boundaries and creating fresh comedy is a dangerous thing that hinges on a hotbed of first amendment issues.

Overall, the panel agreed that formulated ideas are foul, and anyone seriously interested in pitching a concept must know the development process. A pitch must have a concept that stands out, strong characters and good writing. If the executives laugh during a pitch, it is a good sign!

Finding Your Niche

In the panel on "Finding Your Niche: Creatively Getting Your Show On the Air," there was a diverse blend of humor presented from *Mad TV*, *Blues Clues*, *Pepper Ann*, *Tales from the Crypt*, and *Space Ghost Coast to Coast*.

Mike Lazzo, the visionary



The IBCTA panel on "Finding a Niche." Front row, left-right: moderator Fred Seibert, panelists Bill Kopp, Sue Rose, and back row: Corky Quakenbush, Brown Johnson and Mike Lazzo. Photo by and © Craig Skinner/Celebrity Photo, courtesy of WAC.



Doug Herzog of Comedy Central delivered a keynote address. Photo by and © Craig Skinner/Celebrity Photo, courtesy of WAC.

behind Cartoon Network's *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* talk show, believes enthusiasm, passion, and an experimental 'try this' attitude gets things done. *Space Ghost*'s crew had to experiment in order to learn how to cheaply create the outrageous live-action/animation show that features interviews in outer space. Sue Rose, creator of Disney's *Pepper Ann*, described how she made the show she wanted to make. As she said, "It's about time girls got the show they deserve." Today 40% of *Pepper Ann*'s audience is made up of boys, which questions that old belief that girls will watch boys shows but not vice versa.

"It's about time girls got the show they deserve." - Sue Rose, creator of Disney's *Pepper Ann*.

Keynote

Doug Herzog of Comedy Central, and previously of MTV, gave the keynote address with quippy

flair, opening with the fact that Comedy Central is "willing to probe where everyone else is afraid to go." His manner kept the room going as he wowed and wooed about their new hit, *South Park*. He said that Comedy Central is willing to go the distance with a humor brand for the 18-49 male/female split, which makes up 75% of their audience. Herzog went on to a Q&A and defended Comedy Central's approach to promoting *South Park*. They do not run commercials during the day and run the programming at the responsibly late hour of 10:00 p.m. "If your kids are watching *South Park* at 10:00 p.m. at night, where are you?" he said. Pushing the boundaries and creating fresh comedy is a dangerous thing that hinges on a hotbed of first amendment issues.

Social Responsibility

Dialogue was quite heated among panelists and attendees setting out to define "social responsibility" in an FCC-mandated climate, in the panel "Can Social Responsibility Lead to Success on Television?" The FCC qualification states that a show has a board-certified educational consultant, which is at times skirted around and not necessarily de facto. Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network and all other cable stations do not have to comply with the FCC mandate. On all of the stations, what is considered educational has become rather subjective in terms of actual programming. Hopefully, good programming is going to have social responsibility baked into it.

There was disagreement on this topic among panelists who noted how kids want to be entertained at home and learn at school. The difference of opinion appears to be in the hook of the medium.

Producer Gordon Hunt of Hanna-Barbera made a point, "Social responsibility sounds forbidding. Your package should be wrapped in humor. Don't ignore that in social responsibility or you won't get any response from kids." Cassandra Schafhausen of CINAR Films said, "We want kids to learn to be better citizens out in the world, with more control over their lives and their feelings, and to feel good about themselves. What we look for is an effortless frame of reference."

When Cartoon Network asked children what they liked in a cartoon, the focus groups said that they like to relate to the characters and learn new facts, see reflections of justice in heroes and the heroes in themselves. Perhaps children will end up dictating their own morality.

A few conference-goers complained about how the panelists did not cover the promised topics but rather used the forum to talk about themselves. There wasn't much in the way of receptions for socializing. However, the closing reception on Friday night was intimate and pleasant, though a bit cold due to El Niños rain. I am quite satisfied with this year's IBCTA, and feel there was a well-rounded menu of topics that gave dimension to the animation industry.

Sherry Niedelman is a Los Angeles-based independent artist, writer and educator, who promotes non-violence in media through affiliation with the Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles County.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

Toy Fair: A Flood of Animated Toys

At this year's Toy Fair, companies offered more products based on animated properties than *South Park*'s Kenny has lives. Over 40,000 attendees stopped by the Big Apple to get a peak at approximately 5,000 new toys. Here is a rundown of some of the toon-related merchandise coming consumers' way this year.

Combining *Toy Story* with Rambo, Hasbro's *Small Soldiers* figurine sets (MSRP \$9.99) will bring the action from the movie to life.

Features Battle for Attention

Quest for Camelot is Warner Bros. first full-length animated feature film, scheduled for release July 1, 1998. It tells the story of a strong-willed teenager, Kayley, who lived in England over 1,000 years ago. Toys from Hasbro to support this film include: the Dream Seeker Kayley, dressed in a tunic and carrying her father's shield (MSRP \$15.99), and Kayley's love interest, Brave Knight Garrett (MSRP \$15.99) who, dressed in ceremonial garb, is ready to aid his lady in her quest to save Camelot. Plush toys include the talking Devon and Cornwall (MSRP \$19.99), the mismatched two-headed dragon that recites some of the films more memorable dialogue. Camelot will be available on shelves in April.



The Super Singing Tommy doll will sing tunes from *The Rugrats Movie* and tell stories. © Nickelodeon.

Also in 1998 look for Disney's feature *Mulan*, the story of a Chinese girl who dons a boy's clothing in order to join the army, saving her elderly father from having to serve. *Mulan* is expected in theaters this July and in April, Mattel will be releasing a line of toys including the 11-1/2" *Mulan* doll attired in Chinese dress (MSRP \$10.99) and the Secret Hero *Mulan* doll (MSRP \$15.99), who will come dressed in a village outfit that when removed reveals her military fatigues. A unique *Mulan* doll will be the Matchmaker Magic. Apply warm water to *Mulan*'s face and it will miraculously transform her into a Chinese princess complete with

by Joseph Szadkowski

white face, red lips and a hint of eye shadow. (MSRP \$20.99).

Also from Disney will be *A Bug's Life* scheduled for holiday release. Developed with Pixar Animation Studios (*Toy Story*) this animated feature follows a misfit young ant named Flik as he tries to save his colony from a gang of grasshoppers. Mattel unveiled a deluxe Flik that comes to life with sound and motion (MSRP \$19.99) and the large playset where children can play out the movie's final battle scene (MSRP \$31.99). Also in the *Bug's Life* line are the micro playsets (MSRP \$9.99) featuring three scenes from the movie and Micro Figure Packs (MSRP \$3.99) with bug-sized figurines. A line of unique learning toy based on *A Bug's Life* is also coming from Uncle Milton Industries, Inc. Eight new science/nature products are being produced including live insect habitats and adventure toys.

Arthur and D.W., aardvark siblings, were probably the most exciting, yet eerie, toys of this year's fair.

Small Soldiers is DreamWorks' computer-animated film for summer release that features toy soldiers inadvertently implanted with computer chips. These animated toys then stage a battle on their owner's street pitting the Commando Elite against the



TV play-along kit is among the new *Blue's Clues* toys available from Nickelodeon. © Nickelodeon.

Gorgonites.

Combining *Toy Story* with Rambo, Hasbro's *Small Soldiers* figurine sets (MSRP \$9.99) will bring the action from the movie to life. 6 1/2" figures are loaded with battle features and include all of the key characters from the movie, such as the Gorgonite leader Archer and the Commando Elite head Chip Hazard. The entire line will include 40 new toys in all including vehicles, playsets, micro figures and role play items.

Babe, the award-winning film that combined live-action and animation with farm animals, is scheduled to release its sequel, *Babe: Pig in the City* for Thanksgiving 1998. The Universal Studios property is enjoying extensive licensing including a line of the rubbery Koosh-haired toys by OddzOn and the Equity Toys interactive Real Live Babe. This pig may not work with the computer, but she does have her own internal body clock and computerized chip. Once she is activated, she knows the time of day and interacts with the child accordingly. Real Live Babe has eight basic play patterns includ-

ing eating, sleeping, tickling, story telling, smelling and hugging. Real Live Babe comes with the three singing mice that gained certain notoriety in the first film. Real Live Babe (MSRP \$40.00) will be on the shelves in fall 1998.

Rugrats, the No. 1 kids show on television, has an animated movie scheduled for Thanksgiving release bringing the popular characters to the big screen. Paramount Pictures and Nickelodeon have entreated the award-winning Klasky Csupo animation studio to create a whole new story for the little, well, Rugrats. The movie is sure to be a hit with celebrity voices by Whoopie Goldberg, David Spade, Tim Curry and Busta Rhymes, along with a soundtrack packed with musical artists such as Lenny Kravitz, Lisa Loeb, Devo, Iggy Pop and the B-52s.

How do you hide a monster as tall as New York City's Chrysler Building? Ask Sony.

Nickelodeon has planned a multi-category merchandising program for the movie and hot holiday gifts for fans will include toys, games, apparel, gifts and even home furnishings. Mattel will release four movie featured character dolls: 'To The Rescue Tommy Pickles,' 'Going Bananas Chuckie Finster,' 'Roller Skating Angelica Pickles' and 'Together Forever Phil and Lil DeVille' (MSRP \$19.99). Also from Mattel will be the 15" Super Singing Tommy that will sing tunes from the

movie as well as tell stories. (MSRP \$39.99). Look for these dolls, as well as playsets, vehicles and more to release in the fall.

The Power of Preschool

Nickelodeon is also banking on their top-rated preschool cartoon *Blue's Clues* to be a marketing bonanza. Tyco Preschool, a division of Mattel has been granted the master toy license and promises a complete line by 1999. Look for everything from Colorforms to CD-ROM games this year.

One of the hottest animated properties today is the PBS show *Arthur*. A best-selling children's book for over 20 years, the *Arthur* television show boasts over 11 million viewers aged 2 to 11. Arthur and D.W., aardvark siblings, were probably the most exciting, yet eerie, toys of this year's fair (MSRP \$109.95 each). Microsoft has taken the concept of interactive play to the nth degree with these two characters that have vocabularies of over 4,000 words, and through sensors on their ears, hands, feet and watches, play 12 games and activities, say more than 100 phrases

and questions and help children tell time. All without any computer assistance!

Add in the ActiMates PC Pack (MSRP \$54.95) and Arthur and/or D.W. can play along with three scheduled software releases (MSRP \$34.95). The final peripheral is the

ActiMates TV Pack (MSRP \$54.95). This add-on works with the VCR's radio frequency transmitter to send a specially encoded signal and ani-



ZOOB, an interlocking construction toy from Primordial, has been animated in ZOOB Toons, a stop-motion video which will be available to consumers in the fall. © Primordial.

mation technology to the toys. This allows the characters to interact with the PBS program broadcasts. When your children sit down to watch this week's episode, Arthur and D.W. will sing along with them, laughing and commenting on the show that they are watching together. If this is not enough, Arthur and D.W. will also be able to interact with the official *Arthur* Web site.

Disney's My Interactive Pooh

by Mattel brings the funny little bear to life. The CD-ROM games included with the plush doll bring the other characters that inhabit 100 Acre Wood into play through fun learning activities. This has to be the most interesting and cutest toy, seen at the show.

Where Is The Action?!

How do you hide a monster as tall as New York City's Chrysler Building? Ask Sony. Godzilla was by

far the most exclusive and elusive property at this year's Toy Fair. The green monster has a major film release in May and cartoon series in the fall but Sony kept the beast under wraps. Trendmasters, Inc. is the primary toy licensor and promises a load of plush toys, playsets and action figures befitting this gargantuan.

From the animated *New Batman Adventures* are new basic (MSRP \$6.99) and deluxe (MSRP \$6.99) figures and the new Crime Solver Dynamic Decoder Gear courtesy of Hasbro. Also new is an updated Animation Batmobile (MSRP \$21.99) with a hidden blaster under the hood and a special custom decal kit. Collectors will also want the new 12" animated figures (MSRP \$25.99) featuring Batman, Nightwing and Joker all with special accessories.

Marvel Comics' Silver Surfer is flying high again thanks to a popular cartoon series on the Fox Kids Network. Toy Biz's response was immediate and swift with a complete line of action figures. The favorites are a tie between 14" Electronic Light and Sound Galactus (MSRP \$12.99) and the 5" Cosmic Power Blasters (MSRP \$5.99) that shoot light-up projectiles.

All in all, it's a great time to be a media-consuming kid.

Joseph Szadkowski writes on various aspects of popular culture and is a columnist for *The Washington Times*.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

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Director of MTV Animation**

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T.R.A.N.S.I.T.:

A Delicious Sense of Understanding and Journey

film review by Emru Townsend

T.R.A.N.S.I.T. by Piet Kroon. All images herein are courtesy of Iain Harvey and © 1997 Illuminated Film Company/Picture Start.



You know how that Hollywood self-referential game goes? The one where you describe something by comparing it to something else, like, "It's *Star Trek* crossed with *My Best Friend's Wedding*," or "It's *Sailor Moon* meets *The Spice Girls*?" (Say, that's not bad ... better call my agent.) Well, I can do the same thing to describe *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* Ready? Here goes: *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* is a 1920s *Æon Flux* crossed with an episode of *Seinfeld* and mixed with *Anijam*.

Wait! Don't leave! Let me explain.

Understanding the Comparison

T.R.A.N.S.I.T., you see, is the story of a woman, Emmy, tragically intertwined with two men, Oscar and Felix, in the late 1920s. The story takes place in seven locations (Venice, the Orient Express, Amsterdam, Cairo, Baden Baden, St. Tropez, and on board an ocean liner to the Americas), which are signaled by stickers on a suitcase which follows the characters throughout this trans-oceanic tale. Each location has its own self-contained story and definitive art style, animated by a different artist, much like *Anijam* and other collaborative films. Each segment is bracketed by close-ups of the stickers on the suitcase.

Much like the first six *Æon Flux* shorts, the 12-minute film is completely without dialogue. The story is told entirely with visuals and audio, such that you have a good idea as to what's going on — but a

second viewing will probably make things clearer, as you pick up on the more subtle clues you missed the first time.

***T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* is a 1920s *Æon Flux* crossed with an episode of *Seinfeld* and mixed with *Anijam*.**

Finally, like a recent episode of *Seinfeld*, the entire story is told backwards. Sort of. The segments are shown in reversed chronological order before jumping back to the beginning/ending, leaving us to watch the effects before learning the causes.

Blinding Art

From an analytical viewpoint, what makes *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* so fascinating is that these three unusual elements aren't just there for show. The film needs them in order to work.

First, the art styles. Though the film was written and directed by Piet Kroon, director of *DaDa*, production designer Gill Bradley actually created the designs for each segment based on art styles popular around the time of *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.*'s setting. The result: seven examples of individual artistic sensibility unified by the vision of one person. As well as a different location, each segment also uses a different palette and evokes a different mood, providing a kind of visual barometer of the emotional ups and downs of young Emmy's life. What's amazing is that despite the different styles and directors, a casual viewer could

look at any two sequences and never doubt that they're from the same film.

Revelation and understanding are earned as the mysteries of the past are peeled away.

A Unique Structure

Next, the reversed storytelling. Whereas *Seinfeld* used this device for comedy, *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* uses it for tragedy. In the first (last?) four segments, we see three lives being destroyed; in the last (first?) three, we see the events that led up to it all, and experience a certain sense of inevitability. We want to warn Emmy of what her actions will bring. As more is revealed, we also want to warn Felix, then Oscar. However, like some mythical prophet, we've seen the future and all we can do is observe.

Reversed storytelling is a wonderful device when it works, and it works well in *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.*: seemingly straightforward events are all the more significant because we know the consequences of the characters' actions. *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* combines many of my favorite aspects of Peter Chung's *Æon Flux*, not the least of which is stellar, non-linear, dialogue-free narrative. It's relatively easy to find films that effectively tell stories without dialogue. What's harder is finding films that tell complicated, emotionally laden films without dialogue. Narrow those down to the few that use unconventional structure, and you're left with a scant handful. *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* is one of them.

T.R.A.N.S.I.T. also features an evocative score which wraps around the viewer and draws him into the story; a story which requires the viewer to pay attention to detail

and actively think about the events on the screen, rather than have everything spelled out. Revelation and understanding are earned as the mysteries of the past are peeled away. It's a feast for the mind as well as the eyes and ears.

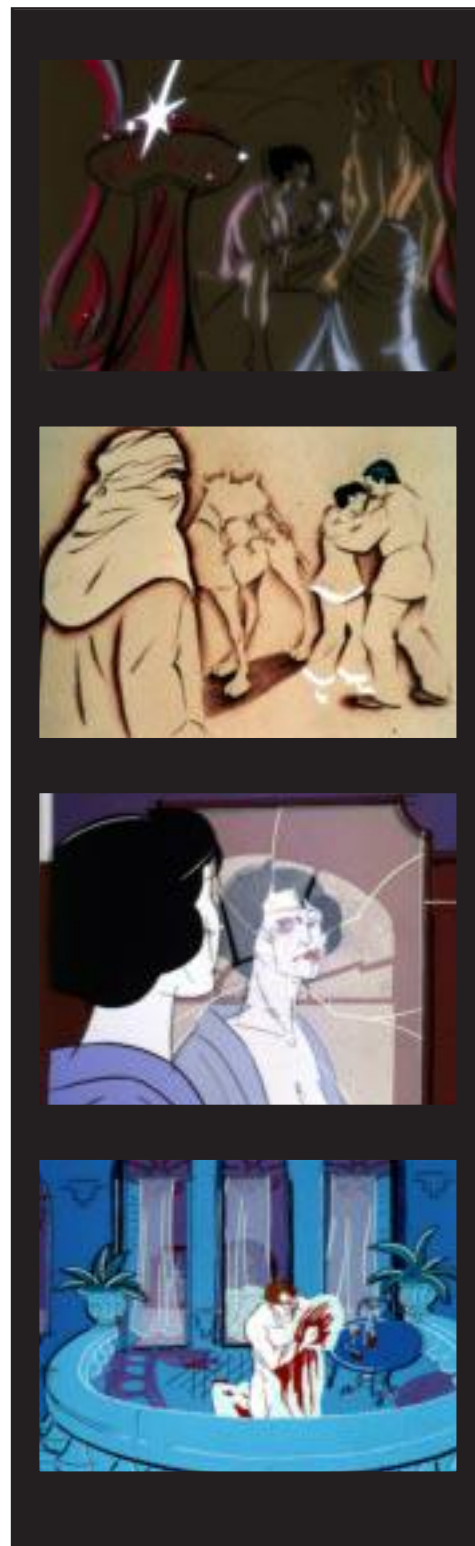
The Journey of *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.*

All of this leads to my disappointment with the film's end, which I won't reveal here. First, we see the seemingly immortal suitcase meet its demise. Second and more importantly, subtitles come up to tell us a little about Emmy and Felix, and what happened to them. After brilliantly unfolding the events over ten minutes without titles or dialogue, to have this final morsel revealed so blatantly is just out of place. It doesn't exactly wrap things up, but it detracts from that ingredient we had savored throughout the rest of the film; that delicious sense of gradual, though maddeningly incomplete understanding. Ultimately, the real pleasure of *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* is not in the destination, the film's ending, but rather in the journey we took to get there.

A second viewing will probably make things clearer, as you pick up on the more subtle clues you missed the first time.

The on-line version of this article includes a Quicktime movie of *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* directed by Piet Kroon. <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.12/2.12pages/2.12townsendtransit.html>

Visit the *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* web site online at <http://www.awn.com/transit>



Emru Townsend is a freelance writer who won't stop talking about cinema, animation and computers. He is also the founder and former editor of FPS, a magazine about animation.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

The Enchanted World of Rankin/Bass

by Rick Goldschmidt

book review by Scott Maiko

What the publishing industry needs is a Burgermeister Meisterburger-type executive to pass an edict whereby no over-zealous fans may write books about the subjects on which they obsess. Either that or we need *Mad Monster Party's* evil scientist Baron Von Frankenstein to clone the very competent Jerry Beck and let him (them?) write all such books.

Case in point: the new Rankin/Bass (R/B) book. Fan-turned-writer Rick Goldschmidt might have been more accurate in titling it, "The Enchanted World of Rankin/Bass/Goldschmidt." Goldschmidt admits that he focused the book toward the fans. "Rankin and Bass deserve a book and a larger place in animation history," he stated. His love is fairly clear by the illustrations peppered throughout the book, like the Jack Davis drawing of Rick and his wife, the photos of him with his collection of Rankin/Bass memorabilia, and his awkward writing style which often falls into the first person (such as when he notes which of the animation team's productions are among his favorites), that this is a book not so much about

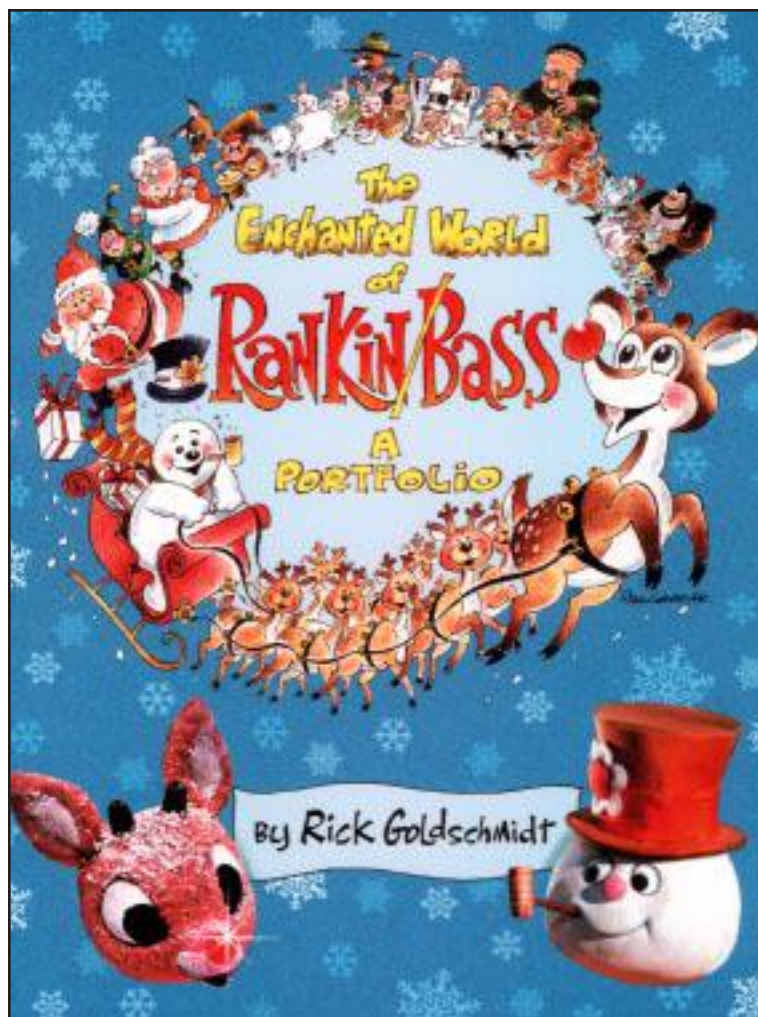
Rankin/Bass' history but about why some guy named Rick Goldschmidt likes Rankin/Bass.

Aside from the poor writing and lengthy synopses of each of Arthur Rankin, Jr. and Jules Bass' larger productions (Do we really need to know that, "[The character named] Blarney uses many Irish sayings like,

the-scenes info, anecdotes, and photos. While the animation was done in Japan, we still want to know the production details. Who made the puppets and how were they made? How big were the sets? How long did it take to film an average Rankin/Bass special? While Goldschmidt concedes that fans of the Animagic (R/Bs trademark for their stop-motion process) productions are most fascinated with the stop-motion figures, his *only* remarks about them are contained in two succinct sentences (eighteen words!) noting that the puppets are in Rankin and Bass' private collections. End of story! What of that reasonably well-known account that many of the puppets were in fact thrown out in the mid-1980s? Why is a book about the production company whose hallmark is a stop-motion reindeer with a light bulb nose so quick to brush off this entire subject?

Speaking of Rudolph, what happened to *her*? 'Her' being Billie Mae Richards, the woman

who voiced the red-nosed reindeer in the original special and two sequels, not to mention other characters in numerous other R/B pro-



'Don't chew your cabbage twice' and 'Begorrah,'" in *The Leprechaun's Christmas Gold?*), the book is amazingly short on behind-

ductions. Where is she today? Her only "appearance" in the book, aside from her name listed in the credits of various specials, is in a small photo, showing her leaning on a piano with the rest of the *Rudolph* cast. Is she even still alive? How hard could it have been to include *some* info on or quotes from this woman, who most certainly would have a few interesting anecdotes to share? Instead, Goldschmidt manages to contact one-time R/B voice actors Morey Amsterdam (who offers us the fascinating insight, "It was a pleasure to work on *Rudolph's Shiny New Year...*") and Art Carney ("It was a pleasure working on something that children can enjoy...Rankin/Bass should be proud of what they have been able to accomplish in family entertainment.").

This is a book not so much about Rankin/Bass' history but about why some guy named Rick Goldschmidt likes Rankin/Bass.

Adding insult to injury, there's not even a *cursory* explanation of the stop-motion animation process. Sure, such a side bar may seem to be extraneous information to most readers of this review, but the general public, who probably got this book as a Christmas present, would have appreciated some insight into the actual physics of making the Animagic films.

While the author explains in his introduction that the book to follow is not a "complete personal history" of Arthur Rankin, Jr. and Jules Bass, the fact that he glosses over their early commercial work (examples of which exist at least on VHS tapes of

unlicensed, fan-compiled vintage commercial collections) is a disappointment.

The book is illustration-heavy with numerous stills from the productions.

On the plus side, the book is illustration-heavy with numerous stills from the productions. It covers the aforementioned Animagic films, their numerous cel-animated specials and series, and even their lesser known live-action works. Plus, yes, there is pre-production artwork a lot of which was executed by frequent R/B collaborator and *MAD* artist Paul Coker, Jr., images of old and new Rankin-Bass related merchandise, lobby cards, ads which ran in *Variety*, and *some* behind the scenes photos. All are fascinating to see, but a lot of these illustrations aren't documented very well. A photo of sheafs of sheet music from *Rudolph* implies that there was an 'Abominable Snowman' song that was apparently cut from the final version of the special, though the author makes no mention of this anywhere in the text. In fact, there's a lot about *Rudolph* that was left out. A short quote from Larry Mann, the voice of Yukon Cornelius, hints that Burl Ives was brought in after the original soundtrack was recorded. This would explain why the Sam the Snowman character has no interaction with the other characters; his scenes were filmed later. But Goldschmidt never follows through on this, nor are we given any idea of what was snipped from the hour-long special to make room for Ives' narration scenes.

Still, points must be given to

Goldschmidt for including a few interesting tidbits, including photos of the numerous recent unlicensed resin kits of the more popular characters and a side bar and two stills from *MAD TV's* hilariously violent and profane *Rudolph* parodies [*Ragin' Rudolph* by Corky Quakenbush]. Unfortunately, despite this, the book still comes up short.

Still, points must be given to Goldschmidt for including a few interesting tidbits...

Perhaps King Moonracer, the beneficent leonine monarch of the Island of Misfit Toys will bend the rules and give this unfortunate book a home until the more thoroughly-researched and more professionally-written second edition makes its way to bookstores.

The Enchanted World of Rankin/Bass by Rick Goldschmidt, Tiger Mountain Press, 1997. 176 pages, illustrated. ISBN: 0-9649542-8-1. (U.S. \$18.95)

Scott Maiko is an LA-based freelance writer having been published in such obscure zines and magazines as MOO juice, Thrift SCORE, Wild Cartoon Kingdom, A to Z, and SnackBar Confidential.

Time, The New Yorker, and Variety are but a few of the much more widely-known publications for which he's never written. In his spare time, Scott enjoys writing short, three-sentence-long bios about himself in the third person.

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RealFlash: The First Step

by Pat Boyle & Shelley McIntyre

Lets say you've got a great piece of animation that you want to post on your web site. You advertise. You get your audience excited. They go to your site, and then...they wait. As incredible a tool as the Web is, its "instant communication" feature is obliterated if your audience has to wait ten minutes to download a file. More often than not, a viewer will become frustrated and leave your site before seeing the piece you've worked so hard to create.

Enter Streaming Media

When a file is streamed by a user over the Internet or a corporate LAN (local area network), it starts to play instantly without the wait associated with downloading large files. Until recently, only audio and video files could be streamed over the Web, using applications like RealNetworks' RealAudio and RealVideo.

There is a strong case for entertainment programming on the Net today:

- There are more than 600,000 RealPlayers being downloaded from RealNetworks' web site weekly to view RealAudio, RealVideo and RealFlash content such as news, music, entertainment, education and training.
- Some of the more popular RealFlash clips on the site are playing over 8,000 times daily. With over 240,000 viewings monthly, that's close to the size of a television audience.
- More than 100,000 hours of live



South Park characters have been brought to the Web by Smashing Ideas Animation, using RealFlash. © Comedy Central.

RealAudio/RealVideo programming are available each week over the Internet.

Just as the technical quality of radio and television content improved during its development period, so shall streaming media. The Internet as a new mass medium is still developing and new innovations in streaming media are driving it further. Sound quality has been improving steadily since RealAudio was introduced in 1994. Currently audio works so well with a 28.8 Kbps modem that more than 35 record labels are using the Internet as a promotional tool for their artists and over a thousand radio stations broadcast over the Net.

Internet video, although superior to what was available just a year ago, still faces limitations. The experience is far from full-screen. Most Internet video over a 28.8 Kbps modem is presented in a small window and

the video can be grainy and jumpy. While the quality of video continues to improve, the challenge is to identify new "datatypes" that will work well with audio, and that deliver rich multimedia experiences over low bandwidths.

Just as the technical quality of radio and television content improved during its development period, so shall streaming media.

Advantages of RealFlash

RealFlash is a big leap forward in delivering high-quality multimedia. Jointly developed by Macromedia and RealNetworks, RealFlash is a combination of vector animation technology from Macromedia, and streaming technology from RealNetworks. Specifically, it's a Flash file synchronized with a RealAudio file, and played back in a RealPlayer. It's the first of a few applications that RealNetworks is adding to its client/server RealSystem to improve the end user experience.

Authoring is done in the Flash Tool from Macromedia where animators can edit the animation and synchronize it with audio. To publish to the Web, the final production must be hosted by a RealServer, which is available from RealNetworks.

Vector-based animation is well-suited to streaming media. The animation software defines a shape, and uses x-y coordinates to move the

shape from place to place on the screen. Since it doesn't save images of each frame, the file size is substantially smaller than frame-based animation. Maintaining a small file size is essential to stream animation effectively, as most viewers use 28.8 Kbps modems.

When a file is streamed, it starts to play instantly; no downloading, no waiting.

Another terrific feature of RealFlash is presentation size. Gone are the days of the two inch screen. RealFlash allows content creators to display animation in a 320 x 240 pixel box or larger, depending on the system. Also, you can embed RealFlash animations in a HTML page. The RealPlayer 5.0 can be implemented as a stand-alone player, a Netscape Plug-in and an Active-X Control. Given the ubiquity of these applications, a RealFlash animation can run on any machine.



Art3, a RealFlash animation piece by Gennady Troinin, is entered for competition in the RealFlash Animation Festival. © 1998 Art3.

These two qualities combine for an extremely powerful Internet application. Authors benefit from the most advantageous features of streaming media: the instant and random access of a media clip, while preserving the detail of the illustrations in a large window, with great audio quality and a high frame rate.

Putting It To Use

This presents a great opportunity for animators and producers of original content on the Internet. RealFlash is well-suited for storytelling, cartoons, music videos, advertising, and training and marketing presentations:

- Storytelling because producers can have detailed storyboards while letting the quality of RealAudio drive the experience.
- Cartoons because of the ability to stream compelling artwork over a 28.8 kbps modem to an audience of millions.
- Music videos and movie trailers because the image handling, transitions, effects and color capabilities of Flash can deliver television-quality productions with RealAudio.
- Advertising because companies can create dynamic "infomercials" using compelling graphics and audio.
- Training and illustrations because of the powerful drawing capabilities of Flash.

Animation companies such as Disney, Warner Bros., and MGM have already demonstrated uses of RealFlash in the entertainment realm, as have numerous design companies. You can check out RealFlash animations by downloading the RealPlayer 5.0 from the Real Networks



Moe, a RealFlash animation from Snap! Media in Toronto was created for the launch of RealFlash in 1997. © Snap! Media.

web site. Then, visit our animation showcase for a mix of productions ranging from movie trailers to cartoons to product training.

There are many more innovations to come for producers as streaming media continues to evolve.

There are many more innovations to come for producers as streaming media continues to evolve. RealNetworks is developing new features for existing products, as well as new products for Internet programming, such as streaming images and text. RealFlash is the first step in bringing high quality animation and audio to the Internet.

Pat Boyle is the Product Manager for RealFlash at RealNetworks. Shelley McIntyre is the Project Coordinator for the RealFlash Animation Festival.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love RealFlash

by Bill Predmore

Last October we received a call from RealNetworks asking if we'd be interested in creating content for the upcoming launch of their new streaming media solution, RealSystem 5.0. Specifically, RealNetworks was

searching for a company to create animation sequences in RealFlash streaming animation based on Macromedia's Flash technology, synchronized with RealAudio. We were in the process of wrapping up a long project for the Microsoft Network (MSN) that was entirely based in Flash, so the chance to transition into this project seemed like a golden opportunity.

For the previous six months we'd been working on what was billed as the world's first interactive web-based cartoon, slated for launch in late fall 1997 on MSN. The project was a dream come true. We were responsible for taking artwork provided by Spümcö (creators of *Ren & Stimpy*), and building out 5-7 minute fully-animated "episodes" using Flash. However, due to the recent restructuring at MSN, *Weekend Pussy Hunt*, later changed to the more consumer-friendly *Comic Book*, is unlikely to ever make it to the Net. The project did have its benefits: the chance to work with Spümcö's John Kricfalusi, and the hundreds of hours we spent using Flash provided us with



Using Macromedia's Flash 2, POP! and Spümcö partnered to create some of the most intriguing animations the web has seen to date. © Spümcö.

an education in web-based animation production that would have otherwise been impossible to get. Although *Comic Book* won't be available to the public, John K. has produced his own Internet cartoon series, *The George Liquor Program*, which can be seen on the Spümcö web site at www.spumco.com.

RealFlash: The Next Step

It was during our first face-to-face meeting with RealNetworks that we found out exactly what RealFlash was and what it could do. RealFlash combined a Flash .swf file (a compiled Flash animation) and a .rm or .ra file (a RealAudio file) into a synched stream that would play through the RealSystem 5.0. For the first time it was possible to send streaming (read: no waiting) animation with high-quality sync audio to users who had only a 28.8 modem.

RealFlash solved many problems we had encountered when using audio in Flash 2.0. Although Flash allows audio to be placed at specific points in an animation sequence, it is difficult to maintain sync throughout long passages of audio, especially lengthy sections of dialogue. In addition, using long passages of music underneath a scene is almost impossible due to file size limitations, so in most cases only "looping"

audio can be used to score a scene. Using Flash alone, it was simply impossible to produce pieces that contained anything close to professional quality audio.

In the month following our meeting with RealNetworks, we produced several pieces for the RealSystem launch, most notably two cartoons featuring Warner Bros. Looney Tunes characters, as well as a rendition of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart* for the Sci-Fi Channel. When we started, the process seemed a bit more complex than simply authoring in Flash. However, as we got deeper into the project, we realized that as long as one follows some straightforward guidelines, creating content in RealFlash is actually quite simple.

For the first time it was possible to send streaming (read: no waiting) animation with high-quality sync audio to users who had only a 28.8 modem.

Choosing Between Flash and RealFlash

As you begin a new project, it's important to note that while both Flash and RealFlash are effective tools for producing web-based animation, you'll find that there are some projects which are better suited to one than the other.

Flash vs. RealFlash

RealFlash offers excellent quality sync audio and requires hosting on

special server. Flash does not require a special server, but audio quality is poor and sync audio is extremely limited.

Which one to choose? It depends on the nature of your project. Audio issues aside, the two main features which differentiate these products are interactivity and hosting. Flash allows for non-linear animation with interactivity, while RealFlash requires animation sequences that are linear, but does allow some very limited interactivity. Flash content can be placed on any type of web server and still stream to the client browser, while RealFlash requires that the content be hosted on a RealServer 5.0.

Many Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can now host RealFlash clips without an additional charge beyond normal account fees. This consideration aside, one is left with a fairly simple decision: use Flash if your project includes interactivity, use RealFlash if it doesn't.

As we got deeper into the project, we realized that as long as one follows some straightforward guidelines, creating content in RealFlash is actually quite simple.

The RealFlash Process

Building RealFlash content requires either knowing or learning Macromedia Flash. Although you'll make specific decisions about your animation knowing that its final format will be in RealFlash, most of the work to create a RealFlash sequence is done after your work in Flash is complete.

To begin creating RealFlash content you'll need the following software,

all of which is available on the RealNetworks web site.

- Macromedia Flash 2.0 (which can be downloaded from Macromedia for a 30-day trial)
- Real Player 5.0.
- Real Encoder 5.0.
- RealFlash Optimization Toolkit.

Using our work on the Warner Bros. animation as an example, you can follow these steps as a guideline to create your own RealFlash content. I've purposely skipped over the actual animation process in Flash, as this is something you'll already need to know before beginning a project. In addition, this outline describes the process as it occurs on the Macintosh platform, so PC users may find that some file types differ on their systems.

Your Software Toolbox

Required:

- Macromedia Flash 2.0
- RealPlayer 5.0
- RealEncoder 5.0
- RealFlash Optimization Toolkit

Useful:

- Adobe Photoshop 4.01
- Macromedia Freehand 7.02
- Adobe Streamline 3.1
- Netscape Navigator 3.0 or higher
- Macromedia SoundEdit16 2.0

Step One: Creating the Artwork and Sequence Elements

The artwork in the Warner Bros. piece came both from existing Adobe Illustrator .ai files, as well as new artwork that was drawn specifically for the project. To begin, all existing .ai files were imported directly into Flash. The new artwork was scanned and saved using Adobe Photoshop, and then opened in Adobe Streamline and

converted into vector-based artwork and re-saved as .ai files. Next, we opened each file in Macromedia Freehand and manually removed 'points' to clean up the line, as well as to reduce the eventual file size of the Flash file, i.e. the fewer points, the smaller the file. Finally, the cleaned-up artwork was imported into Flash, and we were able to begin coloring the art according to color keys provided by Warner Bros.

Once the coloring was complete, we needed to address audio in our piece. We received music and multiple sound effects from the Warner sound library as .wav files. To import them into Flash, we first needed to convert them to .aiff files, which was done using Macromedia SoundEdit16. PC users can skip this step, as Flash supports .wav files on the PC version. Finally, all of the pieces we needed to complete the piece were in Flash, and we were ready to begin work on the animation sequence.

Step Two: Creating the Animation Sequence

As with all content created for the web, bandwidth must be a consideration in nearly every decision that is made. Our target audience for this piece were users with a 28.8 modem, so we needed to limit the entire RealFlash sequence to a streaming rate of 20 kbps (kilobits per second). To manage that, we needed to limit our animation to 12 kbps, leaving 8 kbps for audio.

To keep our animation at 12 kbps, we made some specific choices about how the piece would be built. We decided, as RealNetworks recommends, on a frame rate of 7 frames per second. We also tried to be realistic about the amount of art and animation that would be used

to tell our story, as the fewer pieces of art that are used, the smaller the eventual file size. In addition to the bandwidth concerns, we knew that large-frame animations have difficulty running on machines with a slower processor, so we made our movie dimensions fairly small (358W x 240h).

Now that the parameters of our sequence were set, we were finally able to begin the animation process in Flash.

Step Three: Creating the RealFlash Sequence

Once we were satisfied with our animation sequence, we began the process of creating the files to be used in the RealFlash animation. First, we exported the movie without audio as an .swf file, warner.swf, making sure to remove all frame actions. We then exported the same movie as a quicktime .mov file with the audio set at 44.1 khz 16 bit. Double-clicking on the .mov file allowed us to open the file in MoviePlayer, where we could export the audio as an .aiff file.

We were then able to use the RealEncoder to open up the .aiff file and encode it as an 8 kbps .rm file, saved as warner.rm. This step left us with two files to work with: warner.swf and warner.rm.

To complete our work on these two files, we 'tuned' our .swf file using swftune.exe, which is included in the RealFlash Optimization Toolkit, making sure that the buffer time was no more than 15 seconds. Although this tuning process is at first somewhat unintuitive, you're basically setting a buffer time for the sequence by adjusting the streaming rate of your animation. The higher the streaming rate, the lower

the buffer time. Your only concern is to insure that the animation streaming rate plus the audio streaming rate does not exceed 20 kbps when targeting 28.8 modems.

Step Four: Putting it all Together

To finally see and hear the RealFlash piece, we had to create one last thing - the .ram file. A .ram file is the file that actually tells the server to play your RealFlash content. We created the .ram file in SimpleText, and it only contains the following line: pnm://www.popmultimedia.com:7060/warner.swf+warner.rm

One is left with a fairly simple decision: use Flash if your project includes interactivity, use RealFlash if it doesn't.

The file simply tells our RealMedia server (pnm://www.popmultimedia.com:7060) to play the RealFlash piece (warner.swf+warner.rm).

We were now ready to upload our content to the server. We FTP'd the .swf and .rm files to a special directory on the RealMedia server, and then uploaded the .ram file on our normal web server. To test things out, we just opened up a browser, typed in the address of the .ram file, and watched our piece play through the RealPlayer. RealFlash content can also be played back locally without a RealMedia server by building a .ram file. Our local

.ram file looked like this: file:warner.swf+warner.rm

As you can see, the majority of the time it takes to create RealFlash content is taken up in preparation and the Flash animation process. Once your work in Flash is complete, you should have no problem creating the RealFlash files in under an hour.

Need Some More Help? Check out these pages for some handy tips and tricks in creating RealFlash content: RealFlash Zone, RealFlash Tutorial and RealFlash Guide.

Pushing the Boundaries of RealFlash

The experience with the Warner Bros. piece led us to experiment with some ways to test the limits of the RealFlash process. In our most recent project, *The Silicon Jungle*, we took a vastly different approach to the audio production. Knowing that this project required a higher quality audio mix than we could do in Flash, we decided to do all audio production outside of Flash, taking the project to a local recording studio for scoring and sweetening.

Although we weren't sure if it would work when we started, the process ended up being quite simple. When building our animation sequence, we dropped in scratch audio to get the piece timed correctly. Once we were satisfied with the animation, we exported the entire movie as a quicktime .mov file. This file, which ended up at around 85mb, was transferred to a zip disk and taken to



Edgar Allen Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart*. Developed for the Sci-Fi Channel exclusively for the launch of RealNetwork's RealFlash Player, POP! used original illustrations and narrative to create this streaming 17-minute Flash animation. ©1998 POP! Multimedia, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

the audio post facility. The file was then imported into ProTools, where we were able to build multiple layers of audio, create an original score, and get a professional mix that left us with audio perfectly prepared for the encoding process.



The Silicon Jungle. This piece was produced using RealFlash incorporating animation, images, text, and streaming audio for RealNetworks Human Resources Department. © RealNetworks.

To complete the piece, we encoded the .wav files as 8 kbps .rm files, and repeated step four as described above. Although it added a layer of complexity to the project, we were excited by the possibilities: the picture capabilities of Flash were already fantastic; the audio stream in RealFlash is great; now we had found a way to produce our audio track at the highest possible level.

The Future of RealFlash

Over the past few years we've seen dozens of 'hip' new technologies make grand promises, only to disappear after a few short months.

As you might imagine, there's really no limit to the type of content one can create using RealFlash. Movie trailers, cartoons, training, promotion, entertainment can all take advantage of the unique capabilities of RealFlash.

Over the past few years we've seen dozens of 'hip' new technologies make grand promises, only to disappear after a few short months. For us, RealFlash has been one of the few products that has lived up to its billing and has exceeded our expectations.

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Related Web Sites

RealNetworks web site. to

<http://www.real.com>

RealFlash Zone:

<http://www.real.com/dev-zone/flash/>

RealFlash Tutorial:

<http://www.real.com/dev-zone/flash/tutorial.html>

RealFlash

Guide:<http://www.real.com/dev-zone/flash/guide/index.html>

Bill Predmore works as Creative Director on a team of award-winning on-line designers and programmers at Seattle-based POP! Multimedia. POP! specializes in the production of web-based Flash and RealFlash animation, working with clients such as PBS On-line, The Microsoft Network and Disney's Bill Nye to create some of the coolest stuff on the web.

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George Eastman House

International Museum of Photography and Film

by Dresden D. Engle

George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film in Rochester, New York, combines the world's leading collections of photography and film with the stately pleasures of the landmark Colonial Revival mansion and gardens that George Eastman called home from 1905 to 1932.

George Eastman House...shelters a school of film preservation, which attracts students from throughout the world.

George Eastman, the founder of Eastman Kodak Co., is the father of popular photography. He revolutionized photography by simplifying cameras and film. In 1878, Mr. Eastman, who was working as a bank clerk, experimented with photography, but found the equipment available at the time to be complicated, awkward, and expensive. This led him on a quest to make cameras and film that anyone could use.

Three years later, Mr. Eastman founded the Eastman Dry Plate Co., precursor to Eastman Kodak Co. With a series of landmark innovations, his company created portable, easy-to-use cameras like the "Kodak," introduced in 1888, with the popular slogan, "You push the button, we do the rest." The company also invented a flexible film that helped launch the motion picture industry.

Mr. Eastman's inventions brought him fame as well as fortune, and he is noted as one of the greatest phil-

anthropists of the 20th century — contributing more than \$100 million to charitable causes. Mr. Eastman died in 1932 at age 77. His 50-room mansion was opened to the public as a museum in 1949, and the museum will mark its 50th anniversary next year. In addition, the 12.5 acre museum complex was opened to the public in 1989, which offers new galleries and storage facilities for the archives. The Museum also houses two theaters for screenings: the smaller Curtis Theater and the 500-seat Dryden Theater. The latter offers screenings six nights a week of films from the Museum's vast motion picture archives.

The Museum's extensive archives cover the entire 100-year history of motion pictures, as well as pre-cinema and animation.

The Film Archives

George Eastman House, an international leader in the cause of film preservation, shelters a school of film preservation, which attracts students from throughout the world. The Museum is also one of the world's great film archives.

The motion picture department houses more than 21,000 film titles from 1895 to the present (the Museum has the fourth largest nitrate holding archive in the United States); 3,000 movie posters; 1,000 press books; 5 mil-



The George Eastman House in Rochester, New York. Photo courtesy of The George Eastman House.

lion film stills, including an impressive number of star portraits; one of the world's most important collections of early silent films; hundreds of Hollywood classic and early Westerns; documentaries from Germany, Italy, France, the United States and the former Soviet Union; plus the personal film collections of Cecil B. DeMille and Martin Scorsese.

Animation in the Archives

The Museum's extensive archives cover the entire 100-year history of motion pictures, as well as pre-cinema and animation. Much of the animation collection is currently being inventoried, a project that will be completed by June, and thousands of items have been uncovered. These items include shorts, features, prints, and pre-cinema pieces, according to Edward E.



A pre-cinema animation display in a George Eastman House gallery. Photo courtesy of The George Eastman House.



Zoetrope strips are an example of pre-cinema animation. Photo courtesy of The George Eastman House.

Stratmann, assistant curator of motion pictures. The collection's interesting cross-section of animation includes claymation and puppet animation from a host of U.S. and international filmmakers, shorts from Warner Bros., plus actual cels from the 1939 animated classic *Gulliver's Travels* (Dave Fleischer, U.S.).

The Eastman House boasts a large Fleischer collection and animated titles like *Popeye*, *Felix the Cat*, and *Betty Boop*. Of the 5 million film stills that the Museum boasts, thousands depict animation.

The largest collection, however, of animation at George Eastman House is the pre-cinema animation (pre-1895) and early cinema animation. These include more than 100 lantern slides, 1,200 mutoscope reels, and several hundred animated strips and disks (zoetropes, zoopraxiscopes, praxinoscopes, filoscopes, thaumatropes, phenakistoscopes).

A phenakistoscope ("vision cheater"), for example, was a device for cheating the effect of moving pictures. By viewing 12 or more sequential drawings, intermittently through slots of a spinning disk, the illusion of movement is created. Various methods were used to move the images of the optical projector by employing cranks, gears, levers, and sliding elements. In these ways, pictures were given the illusion of life, and also established a model for photography to follow.

Currently, Sony's High-Definition Center in Los Angeles and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and

Sciences is working with George Eastman House to preserve some of these early disks.

The largest collection of animation at George Eastman House is the pre-cinema animation (pre-1895) and early cinema animation.

See the Animation

Visitors to George Eastman House can view a n d demonstrate many of these pre-cinema devices in a semi-permanent exhibition titled

Enhancing the Illusion: The Origins and Progress of Photography, which opened in 1991. The exhibit showcases the museum's extensive early technology and motion picture collections.

Visitors can also enjoy occasional screenings of animation in the Dryden Theater. A year-long series on animation was featured throughout 1997, titled *Blinkity Blank: Norman McLaren, The Genius of Animation*. The film series was accompanied by a museum exhibition that demonstrated the fascinating world of McLaren's visual imagination. More than 50 of McLaren's works, ranging from 1930 to 1971, were screened. Also featured was an anime festival entitled, the Seventh Annual Medicine Wheel Animation Festival, and the

world premiere of the newly restored *The Lost World* (Harry O. Hoyt, U.S. 1925), which took George Eastman House six years to restore painstakingly. Other screenings in 1997 included *Hare-Do* (Friz Freleng, U.S. 1947), *Elixir* (Irina Evteeva, Russia 1995), *Bimbo's Initiation* (Fleischer Studios, U.S. 1931), *Lady and the Tramp* (Walt Disney Productions, U.S. 1955) and *Peter Pan* (Walt Disney Productions, U.S. 1953).

George Eastman House is open year-round, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 1 to 4:30 p.m. Sunday. The Museum is closed Mondays,



The George Eastman House is currently restoring its large collection of pre-cinema artifacts, including several phenakistoscope animation disks. Photos courtesy of The George Eastman House.

Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. Extended hours in the month of May are 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seven days a week. Tours are offered daily of the mansion, with garden tours offered daily May through October.

For more information about George Eastman House, please call (716) 271-3361. Our web address is www.eastman.org.

Dresden Engle is Public Relations Coordinator for George Eastman House in Rochester, New York.

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NEWS

Business

Toon Union Pickets Nick.

On Monday, February 9, approximately 35 people walked in a picket line on the sidewalk in front of Nickelodeon's "brand spanking new" animation studio at 231 Olive Avenue in Burbank, California. The picketers, comprised mostly of members of several unions under the I.A.T.S.E. umbrella of motion picture-related Union chapters 767, 871, 705, 44 as well as the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists (M.P.S.C.) Union local 839, were there "to let Nick understand that in Los Angeles, animation is done by union labor," said M.P.S.C. president Tom Sito, who works at DreamWorks Feature Animation. Nickelodeon representatives declined to comment. Nicktoons, a Viacom company, employs approximately 300 people in the Los Angeles studio, which produces animated series such as *Angry Beavers*, *Hey Arnold*, *Kablam!* and *Oh Yeah! Cartoons!* The M.P.S.C. Union local 839 currently has more than 2,500 members, working at 12 studios including DreamWorks, Disney and Warner Bros.

Perpetrator Posts Private Pixar E-Mail.

Richmond, California-based computer animation company, Pixar Animation Studios, has reportedly filed a law suit over an anonymous e-mail message that accurately names some 400 Pixar employees' names, positions, and respective salaries. The e-mail was sent via



Union supporters carried signs and formed a picket line in front of the new Nicktoons studio in Burbank last month. Photo © Animation World Network.

computer in early February under the name of Pixar CEO Steve Jobs, who has denied sending it. Pixar, a publicly-traded company, is concerned that the message could have a negative effect on employee relations and recruiting efforts. Pixar officials were not available for comment.

L.A. Mayor Brings Industry Execs to China.

Eight delegates have been selected to travel to China with Los Angeles Mayor Richard J. Riordan, to promote business development between L.A. and China. Included in the delegation are representatives from several entertainment companies interested in creating original programming for the Chinese market. Among them are Terry Thoren, CEO of Klasky Csupo, Michel Welter, president of international production for Saban Entertainment and Charles Rivkin, president and COO of Jim Henson Productions. With Mayor Riordan and a group of his statesmen, they will travel to Beijing and Shanghai in early March to meet with gov-

ernmental agencies such as The Ministry of Radio, Television & Film and The Institute of Foreign Affairs, as well as private industry broadcasters. Other industries are represented on the panel by Iwerks Entertainment (themed entertainment), The International Channel (cable TV), Paramount International Television (distribution), Creative Artists Agency (talent), ARCO (energy), Lowe Enterprises (theatres), Bank of America (banking) and Hughes (aircraft).

7th Level Alums Form Zoom Cartoons.

Two employees of 7th



Zoom Cartoons Entertainment created animated sequences for IBM which were showcased at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano. Image © and ™ 1993 NAO.

Level Studios have announced their exit and the formation of a new digital animation company, Zoom Cartoons Entertainment. Former 7th Level producer Susan [Deming] Bernstein and vice president of animation Dan Kuenster, have set up shop in Los Angeles. Zoom Cartoons' first project is a spot for IBM which is being presented at the 1998 Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan. The studio is currently in production on a 30-minute animated sequence for Bandai Entertainments direct-to-video feature based on the Tamagotchi toy, *Now Museum, Now You Don't*, which will be released this year.

Universal Forays Into Features.

Universal Pictures has confirmed the formation of Universal Pictures Animation and Visual Effects, a new division dedicated to developing and producing fully animated feature films, with a particular focus on CGI. Co-heading the division are John Swallow, senior vice president of production technology and former Warner Bros. Feature Animation development executive Doug Wood, who joined Universal in November 1997 as vice president of animation production and creative affairs for the new division. Other than the two executives' assistants, Universal intends to keep the new division a "lean operation," said Swallow. While other major studios have created large feature animation divisions (Warner Bros. or Fox) or formed partnerships with production studios (Disney/Pixar or DreamWorks/PDI), Universal's approach to feature animation is unique in that they will outsource all production work to external companies. Three projects have been announced, all of which are in development: *Frankenstein*, a remake of the classic horror tale by

Mary Shelley, *Alien Pet Store*, with illustrator Keith Graves and producer John Williams, and *Miss Spider*, based on the popular children's books by David Kirk. Universal is close to signing a deal with a leading computer animation studio for production of *Frankenstein*, but no production deals have been announced. Universal expects to have its first film from this new venture ready for release by summer of 2001.

People

Musical Chairs. Fox Kids

Worldwide will have to wait at least until July 1, 1998 for **Rich Cronin** to join the company as president and CEO of Fox Family Channel and Fox Kids Network, according to a ruling issued by the New York State Supreme Court. On February 5, a judge ruled that the former MTV Networks executive breached his contract, which ran through June 30, 1998, when he signed a deal with Fox in October 1997 (AF 11/4/97). Meanwhile, Fox is required to pay Cronin under the terms of his prior MTV Networks contract. . . . **Blue Sky|VIFX** has created two new positions in the company, and has hired executives

who will be based in the bi-coastal company's Los Angeles office. **Lee Berger** has been named vice president, Production [division] and executive producer. Berger's background includes work with Blue Sky|VIFX as a visual effects producer, and with Apogee Productions. In addition, **Deborah Giarratana** has been hired as vice president, Filmed Entertainment. She was most recently director of marketing for the Feature Film and Theme Park division at Digital Domain, and prior to that she was head of sales and marketing at PDI. . . . **Iain Greenaway** has been named vice president, creative director of the New York-based broadcast design studio **TZ** (formerly known as Telezign). He was previously creative director for the BBC. . . . **Kenneth Abrams** has joined **Marvel Entertainment Group** as vice president of the company's consumer products division. In this role, he will concentrate on domestic licensing for Marvel's film and TV properties such as *Silver Surfer* and *The X-Men*. Previously, Abrams was director of domestic licensing for Viacom Consumer Products. . . . **MGM Animation** has hired writer **Ruth Bennett** as executive producer and head writer for *The Lionhearts*, an



Lee Berger and Deborah Giarratana both recently joined Blue Sky|VIFX's Los Angeles office.

animated series to run in syndication this fall. Bennetts credits include live-action TV sitcoms, writing experience which MGM expects to bring an edge to the show, which features characters in the entertainment industry. . . . **John Andrews**, formerly vice president of animation at MTV Networks in New York, has joined **Klasky Csupo Commercials** in Los Angeles as executive producer. Also recently promoted to executive producer for the division is **Liz Seidman**, who has been with the company for three years. . . . **Jackie Edwards** has been promoted from merchandising manager to producer at London-based **Hibbert Ralph Animation**, filling a position vacated by Karen Davidsen. Edwards, who joined the studio in 1995, will produce *The First Snow of Winter*, a half-hour film currently in production. . . . **Christopher Oarr** has been chosen as the new executive director of the **Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF)**, succeeding Susan Alston who resigned in September 1997. He is currently director of the Small Press Expo (SPX) and will begin as director of CBLDF in March 1998. . . . Visual effects supervisor **Doug Smith** has joined **Rhythm & Hues** as senior visual effects supervisor. His credits include an Oscar for effects work on the feature film, *Independence Day*. . . . Hot commodities **Trey Parker** and **Matt Stone**, the very "in-demand" co-creators of *South Park*, have signed a \$1.5 million deal with New Line Cinema to write a prequel script to the live-action feature film, *Dumb & Dumber*. . . . **Curious Pictures'** San Francisco studio has signed **Holly Edwards** as producer and added directors **Nick Hewitt** and **Steward Lee** to its roster. Hewitt, 25, graduated from Emily Carr and Sheridan College and joined

Curious in 1996 as assistant animator. Lee, 35, is a Cal Arts graduate who was previously an animator at neighboring (Colossal) Pictures. . . . **Laura Citron** has been named creative director at **Crawford Intermedia**, not production manager, as was mistakenly printed in AF 1/13/98.

Menken Signs For a Decade at Disney. Eight-time Oscar-winning composer Alan Menken has entered a long-term contract with Walt Disney Studios to compose songs and/or scores for animated and live-action films. Menken has composed music for six Disney animated features: *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *Pocahontas* (1995), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) and *Hercules* (1997). His four Oscar-winning Disney songs from those films are: "Under the Sea," "Beauty and the Beast," "A Whole New World" and "Colors of the Wind." Menken also composed the score for the Broadway production, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*. While the contract is exclusive with Walt Disney Feature Animation for a total of ten years, it does allow Menken the option to compose scores for one non-Disney live-action project every two years.

Loesch Joins Henson TV Unit. Margaret Loesch, former CEO of Fox Kids Network, has joined The Jim Henson Company as president of its new Jim Henson Television Group. In this position, she will be responsible for the company's worldwide television operations, including development, production, distribution, acquisitions, video, and a soon-to-be announced general entertainment cable channel. She will report directly to Brian Henson, president and CEO, and Charles

Rivkin, COO of The Jim Henson Company. "I've long admired the integrity and passion of the team at the Jim Henson Company," said Loesch. "One of the most gratifying experiences of my career was the six-year collaboration I enjoyed with Jim Henson while we were producing *Muppet Babies*," she added. Alex Rockwell, previously executive vice president of creative affairs at Henson, will remain with the company in a long-term exclusive consulting and producing relationship. The Jim Henson Television Group will also include Marcy Ross overseeing prime time television, Halle Stanford Grossman heading up children's development, and Angus Fletcher who will be responsible for international television development. "Margaret is a visionary," said Rivkin, "We are confident that having Margaret as part of the team will greatly accelerate the growth of our company on a global basis." Brian Henson added, "There are few people in the television industry who can claim the extraordinary success that Margaret has...Her energy and



Margaret Loesch has been named president of Jim Henson Television Group.

spirit have been instrumental in shaping today's family television industry."

Places

Simpsons House Winner Found.

Ever wonder who won the life-size replica of the Simpsons' family home that we told you about in October? Fox, which built the house as a promotion for the interactive game "Virtual Springfield" and the season premiere of *The Simpsons'* ninth season, has identified the contest winner. However, Barbara Howard, 63-year-old grandmother of thirteen, doesn't want to move from her farm in Richmond, Kentucky to Henderson, Nevada where the house is located. So, she's opted for the \$75,000 that the sponsors have offered instead. Kaufman & Broad, the builder, owns the house until the end of March 1998, at which point ownership will be transferred to Fox and the colorful outside will be painted off-white to match the other homes in the planned suburban development. Fox has not yet decided what they will do with the house. Whatever its fate may be, our virtual tour of the home, including photos and Quicktime movies, can be viewed in the October 1997 (2.7) issue of *Animation World Magazine*.

Rhythm & Hues Creates 3-D CGI

Ridefilm. *Race for Atlantis*, a new motion simulator ride featuring 3-D computer animation by Los Angeles-based Rhythm & Hues, opened in January 1998 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. The largest permanent IMAX attraction of its kind, comprised almost entirely of animation, *Race for Atlantis* is housed in an 82-foot dome with the capacity for 108 passengers at a time. Riders wear individual, wire-

less "E3D" electronic headsets with alternating liquid crystal shutters that, when synchronized via infrared signal with the IMAX 3D projector, produce the illusion of an immersive 3-D environment. Thirty people, including 20 computer artists, worked on the project full-time for 18 months to create the 5,000 frames of film in the 20-minute ride "experience." Rhythm & Hues has created animation for several other motion simulator rides, including *Star Trek: The Experience* at the Las Vegas Hilton and "Seafari" for Universal in Japan. The Los Angeles-based studio is currently in production on effects for the film *Babe II* and an interactive "4-D" attraction for Disney's new wildlife theme park in Florida.

Films

Toy Story 2 to a Theater Near You.

Walt Disney Pictures has decided to release the sequel to *Toy Story* theatrically, rather than directly to video as originally planned. The computer animated feature, which began production at Pixar's Richmond, California-based studio in June 1997, will debut in theaters during the 1999 holiday season, and compete against Fox's second animated feature, *Planet Ice*. Since its theatrical release in 1995, the original *Toy Story* has grossed \$360 million worldwide, and sold more than 22 million videocassettes in the U.S. alone. Disney and Pixar also announced the cast of actors who



Rhythm & Hues created 3-D computer animation for the ride-film, *Race for Atlantis*. © 1997 Forum Ride Associates.

will lend their voices to the computer-animated feature, *A Bug's Life*, to be released in November 1998: Kevin Spacey, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Dave Foley, David Hyde Pierce, Bonnie Hunt, Denis Leary, Madeline Kahn, John Ratzenberger, Jonathan Harris, Alex Rocco, Roddy McDowall, Brad Garrett and Phyllis Diller.

Miramax to Release *Mononoke*.

Hayao Miyazaki's top-grossing animated feature *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononoke Hime*) will be released theatrically in the U.S. this summer by Miramax Films, a Disney company. The film earned its spot as the all-time highest grossing film in Japan, bringing in sell-out crowds, long lines at theaters and over \$150 million at the box office in Japan in 1997. Although the film is known to contain graphic violence, neither the visuals or the music will be edited by Miramax, per strict distribution agreement with the film's producers, Studio Ghibli. Miramax president Harvey Weinstein said, "With great regard for Mr. Miyazaki, our plan is to maintain the film's unique creative integrity." However, new voice tracks will be recorded for a dubbed English version, and Disney is in talks with several actors for the parts (it has been unofficially report-



© Manga.

ed that Leonardo DiCaprio is being considered for the role of Ashitaka). With this announcement, Miramax joins the alliance formed in July 1996 between Buena Vista Home Entertainment and Tokuma Shoten Publishing Company, which brings selected Japanese films from Tokuma's Studio Ghibli and Daiei Studios (*Shall We Dance?*) to audiences outside of Asia, theatrically and on video. No official dates for "Mononoke Hime's" release in Europe have been announced, but the film will be screened at the Berlin International Film Festival on February 11.

South Park Feature? *South Park*, the outrageous (and outrageously successful) animated series created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone is being considered for development as a feature film. A Comedy Central spokesperson confirmed that the project is in very early stages of development and declined to comment further. One of the considerations would be whether the film would be able to exhibit the same R-rated content and language as is contained in the cable TV series, now in its second season on Comedy Central..

Manga Debuts *General Chaos*. Manga Entertainment's Shorts division has compiled its first theatrical compilation of short animated films, *General Chaos: Uncensored*

Animation. The touring package premiered on February 6 at Cinema Village in New York City. Packaged within animated bumpers by Bardel Animation, the 90 minute program features 20 shorts: *Malice in Wonderland* (1982), a psychedelic night-

mare by Vince Collins, *Sex and Violence* (1997), a series of vignettes by Bill Plympton, *Xerox and Mylar* (1995), a clay animation cat and mouse cartoon by Joel Brinkerhoff of Will Vinton Studios, *Donor Party* (1993), an experimental computer animation by Laurence Arcadias, *The Hungry Hungry Nipples* (1997) by Walter Santucci, *Beat the Meatles* (1996) by Keith Alcorn, *Body Directions* (1987) by Karl Staven, *Espresso Depresso* (1996) by David Donar, *Junky* (1997) by Tony Nittoli, *Killing Heinz* (1996) by Stefan Eling, *Looks Can Kill* (1994) by Mr. Lawrence, *Misfit* (1997) by Amanda Enright, *Mutilator* (1991) a student film by Eric Fogel (creator of MTV's *The Head*), *American Flatulators* (1995) by Jeff Sturgis, *No More Mr. Nice Guy* (1995) by Brad Schiff, *Oh Julie!* (1995) by Frances Lea, *The Perfect Man* (1997) by Emily Skinner, *Performance Art: Starring Chainsaw Bob* (1992) by Brandon McKinney, *The Saint Inspector* (1996) by Mike Booth and *Sunny Havens (A.K.A. Meat!!!!)* (1995) by Kathryn Travers. Following the run in New York (2/6-2/12), *General Chaos* will be screened in Los Angeles (Nu Art Theater, 3/6-3/12), Orange County, California (Port Theater, 3/13-3/19), San Jose, California (Camera Cinema, 3/20-3/26), San Francisco (Red Vic Theater, 4/1-4/7), Santa Cruz, California (Nickelodeon

Theater, 4/2-4/6), Salt Lake City, Utah (Tower Theater, 4/10-4/16) and Sacramento, California (4/17-4/23).

Visual Effects

Fx Affects. *Deep Rising*, a live-action underwater adventure film released to U.S. audiences on January 30, features a monstrous animated sea creature created by visual effects and animation teams at **Dream Quest Images**, **Industrial Light & Magic (ILM)** and **Banned From The Ranch Entertainment**. The film ranked sixth in U.S. box office on its opening weekend, bringing in approximately \$4.6 million. . . . Paris-based animation and effects studio **SPARX** created all of the visual effects for *Ma Vie en Rose*, winner of the Golden Globe for best foreign film. The film's effects were created with Wavefront's Explore and Dynamation software packages.

Television

Vinton Making PJs For Fox. Will Vinton Studios is starting production on *The PJs*, a stop-motion puppet animated series created by comedian Eddie Murphy, and being produced by Imagine Television. Writers/executive producers Steve Tompkins (*The Simpsons*) and Larry Wilmore (*In Living Color*) are writing the show, which is about life inside an inner city housing project ("The PJs" is short for "The Projects"). Hoping to expand on the success it had with *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill*, Fox Broadcasting Co. has ordered an initial 13 episodes of *The PJs* from Will Vinton Studios, and plans to air them as a weekly, prime-time series on the Fox network in fall 1999. Will Vinton Studios' Mark Gustafson (*Mr. Resistor*) will direct

at least the first six episodes. Vinton studio heads Tom Turpin and Will Vinton will be executive producers with Murphy. Murphy will also voice the main character, Thurgood Stubbs. In addition to this role, Eddie Murphy is also the voice of a character in Disney's upcoming animated feature, *The Legend of Mulan*.

UPN To Bring Dilbert To Primetime. Also bringing a new animated series into primetime is U.S. cable network UPN, which just ordered 13 episodes of the animated series, *Dilbert* from Columbia TriStar Television. Based on Scott Adams' popular comic strip about a hapless, cubicle-dwelling office worker, *Dilbert* has the "smart, slightly subversive appeal" that UPN hopes will win audiences such as those which have developed for shows like *Dr. Katz* or *South Park* on Comedy Central. UPN aims to launch the series in late 1998 or early 1999. Scott Adams, who says readers have been begging him to bring the character to TV, will executive produce the series with Larry Charles, whose writing and producing credits include live-action shows such as *Seinfeld* and *Mad About You*. *Dilbert* is the fastest-growing comic strip in syndication, and is the subject of 13 books, including the best-selling business book of all time, *The Dilbert Principle*. *Dilbert* made moves into animation earlier this year in a web cartoon created by Protozoa, and in a series of recent television commercials for Office Depot, created by (Colossal) Pictures.

MGM Reveals Animation Slate. Five-year-old MGM Animation has announced several animated series and home videos which are in production and development. Set to debut in fall 1998 are two animat-

ed series: *The Lionhearts* (13 episodes), based on the MGM mascot and set to be distributed in the U.S. by Claster Television, and *Robocop: Alpha Commando* (40 episodes) based on the live-action feature, *Robocop*, to be distributed in the U.S. by Summit Media. International sales for both series will be handled by MGM Worldwide Television Group. On the development slate are the series, *Stargate: The Animated Series*, *The Outer Limits: The Animated Series*, *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* and *Tiny Tank*, all based on existing MGM properties. "These shows are a testament to the diversity that will become the signature of our future in this business," said Jay Fukuto, senior vice president of MGM Animation. Home videos in development include *All Dogs Go to Heaven 3*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Swiss Family Robinson*, *The Monkees* and *Jack the Giant Killer*. MGM will release two home videos during the holiday 1998 season: *The Secret of Nimh II* and *An All Dogs Christmas Carol*.

Clinton Virtually On MTV. No, its not "Rock the Vote"...its "Virtual Bill!" After America tuned in to network TV on January 27, 1998, for one of the most-watched State of the Union addresses in history, MTV viewers were treated to a special called, "The State of Music Videos" hosted by a 3-D, animated "Virtual Bill Clinton." The very realistic lampoon was created by San Francisco-based Protozoa, using motion-cap-



Virtual Bill, Protozoa's 3-D animated character for MTV was featured on the cover of *Animation World Magazine's* February 1998 issue. The "Virtual Bill" image is courtesy of and © MTV Networks.

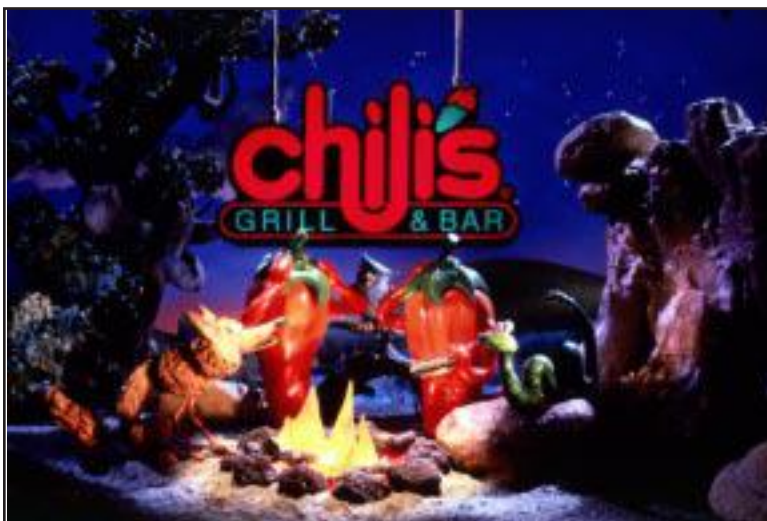
ture technology to animate a CG-rendered character. "Typically, animated characters are expected to be wacky, eye-popping, tongue-wagging cartoons that use extremes of appearances or action to make them entertaining," said Protozoa's creative director Steve Rein. But MTV wanted Virtual Bill to be believable. Animator Steve Rein added that "photo-realistic humans are extremely hard to

achieve in CGI, especially when the subject is such a recognizable figure." Production on "The State of Music Videos" was completed before the media frenzy surrounding Bill Clinton's alleged affair started, so the special did not include topical jokes on the situation which a Protozoa spokesperson noted "isn't funny yet." MTV plans to use Virtual Bill in future broadcasts to respond to current events, live on television.

Commercials

Spotlight. London, England-based **bolexbrothers** created a stop-motion animated commercial for Anhauser-Busch. The 30-second spot features a group of partying beer bottles riding in a beer crate car. The animators were Darren Robbie and John Pinfield. Director Dave Borthwick said, "As the ad was all 'in camera' action, the main problem we faced was lighting the bottles to look 'cold and delicious.' This was achieved by using resin for the cold look and a reflector on each bottle with a lot of overhead light." . . . Portland, Oregon-based **Will Vinton Studios** created a 30-sec-

ond stop-motion animated commercial for Chili's Restaurants, featuring two puppet chili peppers playing music around a campfire. The studio is now completing production on a second spot featuring the animated chili peppers. The agency was GSD&M in Austin, Texas. . . . New York-based studio, **The Ink Tank** created an animated spot for Osco and Lucky Stores. Titled *Words*, the 30-second commercial features animated characters and words painted on cels, combined with a photographed "rewards card" from the stores. R.O. Blechman was creative director and Tissa David was director of animation. The agency was Lois EJL in Chicago. **The Ink Tank** also created a series of animated commercials for the cable network, American Movie Classics (AMC). The retro-styled spots, titled *Martini Months*, star an animated amphibian named "Louie the Lounge Lizard." The spots, which began airing on February 2, were produced with cel animation and backgrounds created in Photoshop, then shot on film. . . . London-based animation studio **SHERBET** is in



Will Vinton Studios' *Ranch Hand* spot for Chili's. Photo courtesy of Will Vinton Studios.

production on three one-minute spots for The Lord Group, based on illustrations by Maurice Sendak. These will join the three spots the studio has already produced for the campaign, under the direction of Jonathan Hodgson. Sherbet worked with London-based post-production facility, The Mill, to develop the delicate color schemes which were shot on film and adjusted in telecine. . . . Toronto-based **Spin Productions** created *Puppet*, a 30-second CGI commercial for Midland Walwyn Capital, which first aired during the Canadian broadcast of the Superbowl in January. Depicting a city skyscraper being manipulated like a marionette, the spot was cre-

ated over the course of four months with computer animation done with AfterEffects, Inferno, Photoshop, Amazon 3D Paint and Houdini. . . . New York-based **Brian Diecks Design** created *Designers*, a 15-second spot for Hanes which features an animated basketball and moving type to sell the underwear. Animation for the spot was created with After Effects. . . . New York-based **Charlex**

animated the IBM corporate logo in a series of spots which aired on PBS, during the IBM-sponsored series called *Science Odyssey* and *Sessions*. The short ids were created with Flame software and the Quantel Paintbox. . . . Boston-based **Loconte Goldman Design** created a broadcast design package for the cable network, ESPN's "Speedworld" event. The project includes 11 animated opening sequences which premiered January 17, 1998 at the Walt Disney World Speedway in Orlando, Florida.

Home Video

Fox Putting \$100 Mil. Into Anastasia Video Release. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment will mount its largest promotional campaign ever for the North American home video release of the animated feature, *Anastasia* on April 28, 1998. The company proclaims that it will invest \$100 million on advertising and promotion for the video, the same amount of money that it cost to build the Phoenix, Arizona animation facility that produced the film. "Our independent research shows that purchase intent for *Anastasia* is among the highest we've ever seen," said Pat Wyatt, who is heading up the campaign for Fox, "In fact, among the core VCR households with children under 11, the positive purchase intent...is higher than *The Little Mermaid* and *Flubber*," she added. Promotional partners which are already in place for the video release include Alamo Rent A Car, Continental Airlines, Denny's restau-



Sherbet's *Wild Thing* spot for The Lord Group. © 1997 Maurice Sendak.



Anastasia comes to video on April 28. © Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment.

rants, Ramada Hotels and Smuckers [jam], in addition to the 45 + licensees which already have *Anastasia*-themed merchandise on the market. Each purchased videocassette will also come with a mail-in rebate for a free *Anastasia* toy. Fox broadcasting companies such as The Fox Family Channel, Fox Kids Network and FX will be enlisted to air television advertisements. Priced at U.S. \$26.98, the G-rated, 94-minute video will be available in widescreen and pan-and-scan formats, in English and Spanish. Soon to begin international release, *Anastasia* has grossed over \$56 million in its U.S. theatrical release so far, and, 24 weeks since its release, is still playing in more than 500 U.S. theaters.

The Brave Toaster Returns. Buena Vista Home entertainment will release a new feature, *The Brave Little Toaster Goes to Mars* on video, May 19, 1998. Inspired by the 1987

film, *The Brave Little Toaster*, the direct-to-video sequel features voices by Farah Fawcett, Wayne Knight and Carol Channing.

What's Up, Doc-Umentary. On April 7, 1998 Warner Home Video will release *Bugs Bunny's Elephant Parade*, *Bugs Bunny's Funky Monkeys* and *Bugs Bunny's Silly Seals*. All three home videos combine live-action footage of animals introduced by Looney Tunes characters. Each 30 minute tape will be priced at U.S. \$9.95.

Disney Sets Dates For Miyazaki And DTV Titles. Buena Vista Home Entertainment (BVHE) will release Hayao Miyazaki's animated feature film *Kiki's Delivery Service* on home video, on June 22, 1998. Disney acquired U.S. distribution rights to eight animated films by the Japanese director, but *Kiki* will be the first release. The film, about a young witch seeking her place in the world, will be dubbed in English with voices by Kirsten Dunst, Phil Hartman, Debbie Reynolds, Janeane Garofalo and Mathew Lawrence. BVHE also announced 1998 dates for the second video release of *The Little Mermaid* on March 31, and new direct-to-video titles, *Pocahontas: Journey to a New World* on August 4, and *The Lion King: Simba's Pride* on October 27.

Licensing

WB On "Quest" For Licensees. Warner Bros. Consumer Products has lined up more than 50 licensees for Warner Bros. Feature Animations first fully-animated release *Quest for Camelot*, which will be hitting theaters in June 1998. The merchandising program for the adventure/drama/humor film is aimed at girls age 2 to 11 and boys age 2 to

7. Initial licensees include Hasbro (action figures, dolls, games), CUC Software and Titus Software (electronic games), Fruit of the Loom (apparel) and Applause (plush, figurines). Additionally, Warner Bros. is lining up promotional partners such as Wendy's Restaurants and Kraft Foods.

Technology

Tools Of The Trade.

Alias/Wavefront, a subsidiary of Silicon Graphics which recently premiered a new 3-D animation software package called Maya (see review in February 1998 issue of *Animation World Magazine*), has announced another new product for creative professionals. "Zap!" is a real-time video and audio software engine for use by animators and effects artists to capture, modify and output work directly from the computer. It is, of course, compatible with Maya, as well as PowerAnimator and other Alias programs. . . . **Autonomous Effects**

has released "Furrific," a new plug-in which facilitates animation of hair, grass, fur and other strand-like effects in MetaCreations' 3-D animation software, Ray Dream Studio 5.0 for Macintosh and PC platforms. . . . **Metacreations** has released version 2.1 of Logomotion, software for Windows and Mac which animates logos and text for simple uses, without the use of expensive or difficult production software.

Logomotion 2.1 is available for U.S. \$99. . . . Yoram Gross-Village Roadshow (Australia), Tele Images (France) and Videal (Germany) are using **Animo 2-D** animation software in the production of an animated TV series called *Skippy's Adventures in Bushtown*.

Houdini 2.5 Escapes! Side Effects



Yoram Gross is using Animo 2-D animation software in the production of the animated series, *Skippy's Adventures in Bushtown*

Software has released version 2.5 of its 3-D animation software, Houdini, and will release a Windows NT version in March. Houdini is used professionally by Blue Sky/VIFX, Sony Pictures Imageworks and DreamWorks SKG. Side Effects is also introducing new motion-compositing software called CHOPs (referring to Channel Operators), which enables animators to manipulate motion-capture data and apply facial animation and lip synch.

Internet & Interactive

Quick Bytes. The **Vrml Consortium** announced that Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML) has been adopted as an international standard by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrochemical Organization (IEC), which will promote content compatibility among developers producing 3-D content for the Internet. . . . **CUC Interactive**, parent company of

Sierra On-line, Knowledge Adventure, Davidson & Associates and Blizzard Entertainment, has been renamed **Cendant Software**, a result of the company's December, 1997 merger with HFS Incorporated. . . . **Marvel Interactive** and **Macsoft** recently released *X-Men: Ravages of the Apocalypse*, a *Quake*-inspired CD-Rom game for Macintosh featuring characters from the "X-MEN" property, which is also a comic and animated series. . . . On February 3, **Disney Interactive** released a new

Windows/Mac hybrid CD-Rom game based on the animated feature, *Hercules*. The film was also released on video on February 3. . . . **Software Sculptors** will release a new Windows/Mac hybrid CD-Rom

game, *Takeru: Letter of the Law* on March 3, 1998. The game is based on manga/anime characters by Buichi Terasawa.

Education

DHIMA Offers CGI Scholarship.

The DH Institute of Media Arts (DHIMA) in Santa Monica, California will give four tuition-paid scholarships to its one-year intensive computer animation training program. Valued at \$13,200 each, the grants include training in Alias/Wavefront PowerAnimator and Composer software on SGI workstations. Participation is limited to U.S. citizens/residents between the ages of 18-35. Applicants should send a resume, statement of purpose and four drawing samples to DHIMA by March 9, 1998. A panel of industry professionals will select four grant recipients.

For more information, visit the DHIMA web site at <http://www.dhima.com>.

SAS Papers Slate. The Society for Animation Studies has selected 32 presentations for its 10th annual conference, which will take place August 6-16, 1998, at Chapman University in Orange, California.



A screen shot from Disney Interactive's *Hades Challenge*. © The Walt Disney Company

Scheduled participants and their presentations to date are:

Robin Allan with "Disney's *Make Mine Music*: An End and A Beginning;" Keith Bradbury with "Australian Animation Before Disney in Australia—Harry Julius;" Alan Bryman with "Theorizing the Early Technologies of Animation;" Rose Bond and Ruth Hayes with "Northwest Animation: The Roots of Creative Variance;" Vicki Callahan with "Animating the Body in the Virtual Landscape;" Alan Cholodenko with "The Illusion of the Beginning, or, In The Beginning Will Have Been the End;" Sybil DelGaudio with "The Hubleys and Human Growth;" David Ehrlich with "The Beginning of 'ASIFA Presents' Collaboration Films: Aesthetic and Political Problem Solving;" Pierre Floquet with "From Tex Avery's Debut to the Beginning of His End: Recurring Theme and Evolving Style;" Michael Frierson with "Clay Animation in Interactive Games;" Tarleton Gillespie with "*Toy Story* and Consumer Culture;" Jeanpaul Goergen with "Puppet Animation Film in Germany From 1915-1945;" Johann Goethals with "The Academy of Ghent: The First Animation Department in Europe;" Jere Guldin with "Puppets on Screening and Panel on the Future of Stop-Motion Animation;" Robert A. Haller with "Jim Davis: The First Eight Years;" J.B. Kaufman with "Variations in Early Disney Animation;" Wendy Jackson with "Czech Animation Under Soviet Occupation;" Tom Klein with "Tex Avery on Trial!;" Scott Kravitz with "Individual Responsibility and Personal Ethics for Artists;" Rune Kreutz with "Absolute Films and the Consequences of Abstraction;" Mark Langer with "The Freak Show Cultural Tradition in American

Animation;" John Lent and Asli Tunc with "Women and Animation in Turkey;" Richard J. Leskosky with "Animation on the Outer Curve;" Gunilla Muhr with "Aesthetic Strategies of the Disney Studio in the 1930s;" Chris Padilla with "The Development of American Animation Festivals;" Nick Phillips with "SIARA and Bob Godfrey;" Luca Raffaelli with "Death and Animation;" John Serpenteili with "From a Child's Point of View: Animation as an Art Form;" Lynn Tomlinson with "Launching (From) The Quays;" David Williams with "From Cat to Mouse: Sheila Graber, U.K. Animator;" Marcello Zane with "The History of Gammafilm Milano and Their Cartoons During the First Period of Italian National Television, 1954-1970;" and Barbara Fleisher Zucker with "Anna Curtis Chandler: A Storyteller Who Could Keep Them From the Movies."

For more information about The Society for Animation Studies, visit the SAS web site in AWN's Animation Village at <http://www.awn.com/sas>.

Call for Entries

Ottawa. The Ottawa International Animation Festival (OIAF) is now accepting entries for its 1998 competition program, which will take place September 29-October 4, 1998. Animated films completed after July 1, 1996 are eligible. There is no entry fee and the deadline for submissions is July 1, 1998. In addition to eight existing categories, a new "Interactive Animation" category has been added for animation in multimedia games. Alexander Tatarsky (Russia), Edwin Carels (Belgium), Christine Panushka (USA) and Adam Shaheen (Canada) have been invited to be on the selection

committee, which will meet in July to review all submitted films.

For information and entry forms, visit the OIAF web site in AWN's Animation Village <http://www.awn.com/ottawa>.

Sinking Creek/Nashville. The Sinking Creek Film Celebration, which has changed its name to The Nashville Independent Film Festival, is accepting entries for its 29th annual competition until April 3, 1998. Winners will receive cash prizes. The festival schedule will include a presentation by Keith Crawford of Cartoon Network. For entry forms, contact sinking.creek@vanderbilt.edu

Zagreb Last Call! If you haven't sent your film in already, be reminded that the World Festival of Animated Films in Zagreb is accepting entry forms for its next festival (June 17-21, 1998) until February 1, 1998. The deadline to send films in is March 1, 1998. Zagreb is one of the few festivals which are patronized by ASIFA, offering filmmakers protection against loss or damage to films. For forms and regulations, visit the Zagreb web site, accessible through AWN's Animation Village.

Events

The World Summit On Television For Children will hold its second annual conference, March 9-13, 1998 in London. Aimed at creating a forum for discussion among people involved in children's television, the event will bring together about 1,000 broadcasters, producers, writers, politicians, regulators, teachers, academics and even children, for seminars, panel debates, workshops and screenings. Scheduled partici-

pants include Micheline Charest of Cinar Films, Sunil Doshi of Alliance Media, Christopher Grace of S4C, Brian Henson of The Jim Henson Company, Robby London of DIC Entertainment and Michael Rose of Aardman Animations. For information, visit www.childrens-summit.org.

The Second World Summit on Television for Children will be reviewed in the April 1998 issue of Animation World Magazine.

Imagina, a computer conference and festival which is often referred to as the European equivalent to SIGGRAPH, will take place in Monaco, March 4-6, 1998. Scheduled programs include an exhibition of companies, and round table discussions on the topics of "web cast," "agents and creatures" and "digital writing and production." Panel participants will represent companies such as Real Networks, Microsoft, Interval Research Corporation, ILM and Sony Pictures Imageworks.

Imagina '98 will be reviewed in the April 1998 issue of Animation World Magazine.

For registration information, visit the Imagina web site at www.ina.fr/INA/Imagina

Awards

Oscar Noms Announced. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences announced the Academy Award/Oscar nominees for films made in 1997. The nominees in the Best Animated Short Film category are:

- *The Mermaid*, a Studio Shar production directed by Alexander Petrov.

- *Famous Fred*, a TVC Cartoons production directed by Joanna Quinn.
- *Redux Riding Hood*, a Walt Disney Television Animation production directed by Steve Moore.
- *Geri's Game*, a Pixar production directed by Jan Pinkava.
- *The Old Lady and the Pigeons*, a Pascal Blais production directed by Sylvain Chomet.

The winning film will be announced during the 70th annual Academy Awards ceremony on March 23, 1998 in Los Angeles.

Visit Animation World Networks special Oscars Report to read about the films, view Quicktime movies and vote for your favorite film, on-line at <http://www.awn.com/oscars>.

Academy Honors Animators. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced this year's honorees for scientific and technical achievement, a category announced in advance of the Oscar ceremony. Honorees were recognized at an awards presentation dinner on February 28, 1998 at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel. Innovators being recognized include Pixar employees Eben Ostby, Bill Reeves and Tom Duff for designing the studio's 3-D computer animation system, and Tom Porter for digital painting. Animation systems developed by PDI and Side Effects Software will also be honored, and Don Iwerks will receive the Gordon E. Sawyer Award.

New York Festivals. The AME International Awards, part of The New York Festivals, were presented on January 23, 1998 at the Marriot Marquis in New York City. Animation category winners include:

International Television and Cinema Advertising, Computer Animation: Gold: *Reebok: Skeleton* for Reebok by Garner MacLennan Design (Australia)

Silver: *Battery Gim* for Panasonic Alkaline Battery by Tohokushinsa Film Corporation (Japan) and *Magical World of Disney* produced through the agency Pittard Sullivan (U.S.).

Bronze: *Orkin Man* for Orkin Pest Control produced through the agency J. Walter Thomson (U.S.).

International Television and Cinema Advertising, Non-Computer Animation:

Gold: *Toys* for Nissan by Will Vinton Studios (U.S.)

Silver: *Rocky* for Pepsi-Lipton "Brisk" Iced Tea by Loose Moose (U.K.)

Bronze: *Stone Family* for Culligan International by Grant Jacoby Inc. (U.S.)

International Television Programming and Promotion, Non-Computer Animation:

Gold: *Disney Channel Repositioning* by Lee Hunt Associates (U.S.) and *Sunny Side of Life* for Turner Classic Movies.

Silver: *The Ambiguously Gay Duo* for NBC/ "Saturday Night Live" by J.J. Sedelmaier Productions (U.S.) and *Testament: The Bible in Animation: Joseph* by S4C (U.K.)

Bronze: *Arena: Sci-Fi* for XYZ Entertainment c/o Foxtel by Garner MacLennan Design (Australia).

International Non-Broadcast Media, Animated Short Film:

Gold: *Redux Riding Hood* by Walt Disney Television Animation (U.S.).

Silver: *Wat's Pig* by Aardman Animations (U.K.) and *Loose Tooth* by McCaulla Productions (U.S.)

Bronze: not awarded.

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DESERT ISLAND SERIES

On A Desert Island With...Pre-Production People

compiled by Wendy Jackson

This month we asked people involved in animation pre-production to tell us what animated films they would want with them if they were stranded on a desert island. Maurice Noble is a background designer who has been working in the industry for over 65 years, and is still active today. His impressive list of credits include design for several of the films on his list: *Snow White*, *What's Opera Doc?*, *The Dot and the Line* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Wes Archer is an animator and director currently working at Film Roman on the prime time series, *King of the Hill*. John Ramirez is a story/development artist at Warner Bros. Feature Animation, currently working on *The Zoo*. His recent projects include *Hercules* and *Toy Story 2* at Walt Disney Feature Animation, where he was also an assistant to Andreas Deja on *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*. What do these three people all have in common? As pre-production artists, they have all found much inspiration in the work of their predecessors and contemporaries.

Maurice Noble's Favorites:

1. *Dumbo* (Disney).
2. *Snow White* (Disney).
3. *Fantasia* (Disney).
4. *What's Opera, Doc?* (Warner Bros.).
5. *From A to Z* (Warner Bros.).
6. *Charlie Brown's Christmas* (Bill Melendez Productions).
7. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (MGM).
8. *Moonbird* by John Hubley.
9. *The Dot and the Line* (MGM).
10. *Duck Amuck* (Warner Bros.).

Wes Archer's Selections:

1. *Feats of Clay*, a recent compilation of clay animated shorts.
3. *Sinbad the Sailor* produced by Ub Iwerks.
4. *The Sour Puss* supervised by Robert Clampett.
5. *Allegro non Troppo* by Bruno Bozzetto.
6. *Mazinger vs. Dark General* (Toei Animation, 1974).
7. "Space Madness," an episode of *Ren & Stimpy* directed by John Kricfalusi.
8. Any short film by Oskar Fischinger.
9. "The Purge," an episode of *Aeon Flux* directed by Peter Chung.
10. "Two Bad Neighbors," an episode of *The Simpsons* directed by me, Wes Archer (I am an egotistical bastard).

John Ramirez's Top Ten:

"These films for one reason or another have great moments in them. I never get tired of watching them!"

1. *The Big Snit* by Richard Condie.
2. *Toy Story* (Pixar/Disney).
3. *Allegro non Troppo* by Bruno Bozzetto.
4. *La Puta* (Studio Ghibli).
5. *My Neighbor Totoro* (Studio Ghibli).
6. *Kiki's Delivery Service* (Studio Ghibli).
7. *Keisei Tanuki Gassen Pom Poko* (Studio Ghibli).
8. *101 Dalmatians* (Disney).
9. *Peter Pan* (Disney).
10. *Hoppity Goes To Town* (*Mr. Bugs Goes To Town*) (Fleischer Studios).

The Dirty Birdy



By John Dilworth

Animation in Unexpected Places

April 1998

They use animation for that? This month, *Animation World Magazine* delves into laboratories, courtrooms, architecture firms, military installations, space and microspace to discover uses for animation where you probably never expected to find it. Silicon Graphics does a lot more than create life-like dinosaurs. We will profile this leader and discuss the many "other" sides of SGI. Wilson Lazaretti will tell us about his experiences teaching animation deep in the Amazon rainforest where electricity does not yet reach. Plus, Mark Langer will also enlighten us on what Disney has to do with atomic energy, General Dynamics and the USS *Nautilus*. We are also going to take a look at fan phenomena this month. Dominic Schreiber is going to reveal what elements our favorite shows have in common.

We will also feature an interview with Max Howard on the eve of the release of *Quest for Camelot*, Warner Bros. Feature Animation's first fully-animated picture. In addition, the UCLA Film and Television Archive will be profiled. In the way of event reviews and previews we have a gang of them this month. *Rugrats Live*, Nickelodeon's traveling stage show coming to a town near you, is reviewed by Ron MacFarlane. We will also hear reports on the Brussels Cartoon and Animated Film Festival in Belgium, MILIA International Content Market for Interactive Media in Cannes, France, and The Second World Summit on Television for Children being held in London. NATPE's AniFX, an event to take place in Los Angeles this May, will be previewed as well.

Animation World Magazine

1998 Calendar

Animation in Unexpected Places	(June)
Visual effects and Experimental Animation	(April)
Jobs and Education	(May)
Adult Animation	(July)
